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CRIMEAN WAR DIPLOMACY
AND OTHER HISTORICAL ESSAYS

Crimean War Diplomacy and Other Historical Essays

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The death of Gavin Henderson in an air crash near Athens in June 1945 was a grave loss to historical scholarship. At the early age of thirty-six he had not only established for himself a reputation among his fellow historians as a leading authority on the relations of the Great Powers at the time of the Crimean War but had made himself known in far wider circles as a stimulating lecturer on Current Affairs. The war commentaries that he gave for the Ministry of Information to big audiences in Scotland; his work in helping to build up discussion circles among Civil Defence workers; and, above all, his numerous talks to members of the Forces in Scotland, the Faroes, the Middle East and Italy had helped many people to view in a sane and balanced manner the complicated problems of a world at war.

Gavin Henderson was born in London in 1909. He was educated at Nottingham High School and the Upper Latymer at Hammersmith. In 1928 he went up to Selwyn College, Cambridge, as an Exhibitioner and he later became a Scholar of his College. After gaining a double First in the Historical Tripos he read for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under Professor Harold Temperley. His dissertation on *The Concert of Europe June 1854-July 1855*, showed both the thoroughness with which he had conducted his investigations in a number of archives and the brilliance with which he had assembled and interpreted the material that he had examined. He exposed more than one historical myth. He showed how some of his predecessors had erred, by failing to go to original sources or by concentrating their attention unduly upon a single type of evidence.

At the same time as he was engaged upon this work Gavin Henderson supervised the studies of undergraduates from several colleges who were reading for the Historical Tripos

and he also gave some short courses of lectures on Current Affairs for the Extra Mural Board and the Workers' Educational Association. While at Cambridge he married. His Cambridge friends and old students cherish happy memories of the hospitality they enjoyed at the little house in Newnham where the Hendersons first set up their home.

Had Gavin Henderson been a member of one of the larger Cambridge colleges he might well have been elected to a Fellowship. As it was, he obtained in 1933 a post in the Department of History at the University of Glasgow and here he was in due course promoted to the position of a Senior Lecturer.

He visited Cambridge regularly, after settling in Glasgow, not only to see Professor Temperley—an article in the *Cambridge Historical Journal* signed by Harold Temperley and Gavin Henderson was one result of their joint research—but also to examine for the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate and the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Examination Board.

At Glasgow his teaching was mainly on the modern period after 1760. He handled with equal facility a large class of some three hundred Ordinary Degree candidates—to whom he lectured on recent World History—and a small group of Honours students taking 'The Bismarckian System 1875-87' as a Special Subject. His interest in Adult Education, already stimulated at Cambridge, continued and he lectured regularly in the winter in Glasgow to adult audiences on 'Problems of World Politics'.

His vacations were to a great extent spent in examining archives at home (the Public Record Office, the Royal Archives at Windsor and the Disraeli Manuscripts at Hughenden Manor) and in Germany and Austria (where he worked at Berlin, Dresden, Hanover, Hamburg and Vienna). A steady stream of articles from his pen were the fruits of this research. But he never rushed into print. Only when he was satisfied that he had fully covered the ground and had carefully examined all the really relevant evidence would he

put pen to paper. He planned to recast and to expand his doctoral thesis into a diplomatic history of the period of the Crimean War, but when war broke out in 1939 he temporarily abandoned this project since other work appeared to him to be more urgent.

He felt strongly that as a student of Modern History who had already had considerable experience of dealing with extra mural work he should in wartime devote as much of his time and energy as possible to problems of the moment and to adult audiences. He believed that the modern historian was, by his studies, particularly well qualified to discuss with adult audiences such questions as the Nazi dream of world domination, the war aims of the United Nations, the progress of various campaigns, and the part that the Home Front must play in securing final victory. He considered that many of those who had the ear of the public—journalists, politicians and others—were far less qualified than the modern historian to pass judgment upon such matters. His frequent visits to Germany and his knowledge of the language enabled him to speak with special authority upon Germany's war aims. On this problem he was in close touch with Lord Vansittart, who has described him as 'a young and vital friend on whom I was counting much for the future'.

Gavin Henderson was soon lecturing to large audiences for the Ministry of Information. That Ministry looked to their lecturers to keep them informed of movements of public opinion, a duty that Gavin carried out with unfailing regularity and great thoroughness. He spoke also to members of the Forces. By October 1941 his work for the West of Scotland Regional Committee for Adult Education in H.M. Forces had increased so much in scope and importance that he was invited by the Central Advisory Council to become one of its full-time Lecturers. The University gave him leave of absence to do this work. It was not until January 1945 that he was able to resume his normal university duties.

Scotland is a difficult area to work from the point of view of Army Education, and Gavin Henderson led a very strenuous life. Long journeys had to be undertaken and, particularly in winter, the uncertainties of the Scottish climate made it far from easy to reach the more isolated units. He spoke to units of all kinds in every part of the country including the Hebrides, the Orkneys, and the Shetlands. He also visited the Faroes. He felt that the more difficult of access the spot, the more necessary was it for the civilian lecturer to get there. The more isolated a unit was the more desirable was it that it should have its ABCA and 'British Way and Purpose' periods. These exertions did not leave him unscathed. Early in 1944 he contracted double pneumonia from which he was fortunate to make a full recovery.

Despite the burden of fulfilling week by week a heavy programme of army lectures he found time for another piece of war work. In 1942 he was appointed a member of an official Committee to investigate Land Settlement problems in Scotland. He came from farming stock, and had for many years kept in touch with relatives who were farming in Ayrshire. He tackled his new task with his accustomed energy and with his colleagues he made extensive tours of inspection in Scotland and in England. Some contributions to the *Farming News* were one result of his study of agricultural problems. In that paper's 'Letters to the Editor', too, he would sometimes set out the townsman's view of things in terms designed to provoke indignant expostulation from his farming friends, who seldom failed to rise to the bait.

For some time Gavin Henderson had urged strongly that civilian lecturers should be sent overseas. There was, he felt sure, abundant scope for useful work among men in the Middle East, in India and in the South East Asia Command. Eventually in the autumn of 1944 he was sent on a three months lecture tour to the Middle East. This was, he felt, the climax of his work as a lecturer to the Forces. In North Africa, in the Paiforce area, in the eastern Mediterranean

and finally in Malta he appeared as one of the first civilian lecturers to give the men not only a survey of International Affairs and Reconstruction, but also news from home. His brother, who visited many of the same units a few months later, soon learned of the impression recently made by a tall bearded figure in an old green sports jacket who supported by chapter and verse views which might not always be entirely pleasing to the more old-fashioned type of army officer. (Much to the relief of his friends the beard was soon discarded.)

Gavin Henderson was very strongly impressed by the folly of leaving men year after year in some of the most outlandish parts of the world, and when he returned to Scotland he proposed to a Conservative Conference a resolution urging the speeding up of the repatriation of men with long service in the Middle East. The resolution was passed.

A very strenuous tour—in the course of which he had a bout of malaria—did not deter him from devoting the Christmas of 1944 to an examination of the archives of the Knights of St. John at Malta—archives which until recently have been little used by British scholars. His last article was based upon research done at Malta.

Gavin Henderson was back at the University of Glasgow in January 1945. At the beginning of the Long Vacation he was invited by the Royal Air Force to undertake a short tour in the Mediterranean area. He agreed to do so and it was while engaged upon this work that he was killed. He left a wife and three children.

Sir Hector Hetherington in a brief address at a Memorial Service held in the University Chapel said; 'My last letter from him spoke of the delight and the inspiration which, in spite of hardships, he found in visiting the sites and cities of southern Italy. He told me how rewarding to a historian were the journeys which he was called upon to undertake. He died near Athens, strangely moved by his visit to that city of the Muses, and under the spell of its beauty. There is some comfort in the thought that the last days of his short life

brought him this deep experience, that at the end of toilsome journeys amid scenes of desolation and of battle, he had found things lovely and of good report, the silent evidence of man's unending aspiration and of the Divine indwelling in our mortal strife.'

The diplomatic history of the Crimean War awaits another pen. But Gavin Henderson's articles upon this and allied topics, now scattered in a number of learned journals, are worthy of preservation in a more permanent form. They have been collected as a Memorial Volume.

W. O. H.

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THE SEYMOUR CONVERSATIONS, 1853¹

The view which until recently has held the field as an interpretation of the Seymour Conversations has very little foundation in fact.² It is derived from the anti-Russian war-fever prevalent during the Crimean period, and

¹ Reprinted from *History*, October 1933 (Historical Revision LXVII).

² BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.—For the Conversations in June 1844 see Stockmar's *Memoirs* (1872), ii. 101 *seqq.*, and Guizot's *Mémoires* (Paris, 1864), vi. 207 *seqq.* The Memorandum itself (Sept. 1844) is in *Parliamentary Papers*, session 1854, House of Commons vol. lxxi ('Eastern Papers,' vi). For reasons that are not quite clear, the description of the Memorandum in that volume is misleading: it states that the Memorandum is based on communications received from the Czar *subsequently* to his visit to England. The manuscript copy preserved in the Record Office [F.O. 65/307] reads 'during', not 'subsequently to'. The correspondence between Nesselrode and Aberdeen was published by S. M. Goryainov in *The Russian Review* (Liverpool, 1912). The texts of the despatches and extracts from memoranda of the Seymour Conversations are in the same vol. of Parl. Papers ('Eastern Papers,' v); there are some important omissions, but this is, on the whole, a fair and judicious selection, although it conceals, to a large extent, Seymour's suspicions of the Czar's attitude, revealed in the Foreign Office MSS. cited below (pp. 245-6).

Zaionchkovskii's work is in Russian: but many documents in French are published in the appendices. Valuable additional material is to be found in the privately printed *Selections from the Correspondence of the Earl of Aberdeen* (1885); Nesselrode's *Lettres et Papiers* (Paris, 1904); the Peter von Meyendorff *Briefwechsel* (ed. O. Hoetzsch, Berlin u. Leipzig, 1923); M. C. M. Simpson's *Many Memories of Many People* (3rd edn., 1898); Queen Victoria's *Letters*; Greville's *Journal*; J. K. Laughton's *Henry Reeve* (1898); Dr. G. P. Gooch's *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell* (1925), and many other works. The accounts of the Seymour Conversations in the standard biographies of the last century are often defective: see *e.g.*, S. Lane Poole's *Stratford Canning* (1888); Evelyn Ashley's *Lord Palmerston* (revised edn., 1879); Spencer Walpole's *Lord John Russell* (1889); Stanmore's *Lord Aberdeen* (1893), and *Sidney Herbert* (1906). The earlier Russian accounts are as unsatisfactory: *e.g.* [Jomini], *Étude diplomatique* (St. Petersburg, 1878; trans. 1882) and S. M. Goryainov, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles* (Paris, 1910). But some of these works contain most important relevant material: the defects are those of interpretation.

Of secondary authorities, perhaps the most trustworthy is the massive work of Theodor Schiemann, *Geschichte Russlands unter Nikolaus I* (Berlin, 1904-

may be summarised as follows: (i) The Seymour Conversations were inaugurated by Czar Nicholas I because of the formation in England (Dec. 1852) of a Government under Lord Aberdeen, and because Aberdeen had already been converted to his views on the Eastern Question in 1844.¹ (ii) The Czar's principal proposal was an elaborate scheme for the partition of Turkey: 'The English Ministers, who had been captivated by the personality of the Czar in 1844, were aghast at the coolness and candour of the specific proposals which were submitted to them in 1853 through the ordinary diplomatic channels.' (iii) 'The English Government never after the disclosures of Sir Hamilton Seymour put any faith in Nicholas. They regarded him as nothing better than a plotter.' They considered that he had offered Egypt and Candia to Britain to induce her to acquiesce in a Russian spoliation of Turkey to the north.

An entirely new interpretation of the episode has been given by recent research, and particularly by the documents published by Zaionchkovskii, in his *Vostochnaya Voina, 1853-6* (St. Petersburg, 1908-13). No satisfactory single collection of documents exists on this question, and the sources are very scattered; but there is enough material on which to base deductions which future research is unlikely to overthrow.

The so-called Nesselrode Memorandum of 1844, and the Seymour Conversations, have been associated in the popular mind since the two series of documents were published simultaneously as Parliamentary Papers in March 1854. The mere juxtaposition of the documents suggested that the

19), but its treatment of this particular episode is unfortunately brief. In English there is a brief and cautious account by W. F. Reddaway in the *Cambridge Hist. of British Foreign Policy*, II. chapter viii (1923). Mr. Puryear's book, mentioned in the text, contains much new material and some interesting suggestions, but it must be used with great caution. It includes an excellent bibliography.

¹ For i. cf. Spencer Walpole in the *Cambridge Modern History*, xi. 312; ii. and iii. are quoted from J. A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question* (1924), p. 259, and Justin McCarthy, *History of Our Own Times* (edn. 1879), ii. 237, respectively.

transactions of 1844 and those of 1853 had an intimate and unsavoury connection. The gap of nine years presented no obstacle to the lively imaginations of contemporary diplomats and journalists. It supplied the final proof that Nicholas had from the beginning been following the precepts of the mythical will of Peter the Great, and had been consistently plotting the downfall of Turkey. Moreover, it was asserted by a factious opposition, and believed by a war-maddened populace, that the Prime Minister, Aberdeen, had been reduced by the 'personal agreement' of 1844 to a condition of complete vassalage to the Czar. These insinuations might have been suffered to fall into oblivion; but a modified form of them has been recently revived in an American monograph on *England, Russia and the Straits Question*, by Dr. V. J. Puryear (California, 1931).

The history of the negotiations of 1844 is still a matter of dispute in some respects; but it is definitely established that the Nesselrode Memorandum, which was based upon 'Conversations' that took place during the visit of the Czar, Nicholas I, to England in June 1844, constituted an 'agreement' to maintain the *status quo* in Turkey as long as possible, and to open discussions if its fall appeared imminent; and established that this 'agreement' was purely personal—between Peel, Wellington, and Aberdeen on the one hand, and Nicholas and his minister Nesselrode on the other. The British Cabinet knew nothing of it. It had no validity, save that given to it by an exchange of letters between Nesselrode and Aberdeen. Nesselrode declared to Aberdeen that the principles 'established' by the Memorandum 'will be the most certain guide as to the course we are to follow in common in Oriental affairs'; but, in his reply, Aberdeen only vouches for the accuracy of the Memorandum and appreciates 'the mutual expression of opinion' with Nesselrode, 'which I hope may be kept in view during all our negotiations connected with the Levant'.¹ Aberdeen's concurrence was thus eminently cautious. The letters were completely

¹ S. M. Goryainov, *The Russian Review* (1912), pp. 108-9.

personal; and, though they are to be found in the Aberdeen Papers at the British Museum, they are not in the Foreign Office archives, and were not published in the Parliamentary Papers of 1854. They are in no sense a proper diplomatic instrument. Neither the Memorandum nor the letters were made known to the British Cabinet. These considerations are lightly swept away by Mr. Puryear: 'Like Nesselrode, he (Aberdeen) acted simply as the responsible agent of his Government.' But Aberdeen's position was as unlike Nesselrode's as possible. Nesselrode was responsible to the Czar, who approved the Memorandum, and Aberdeen was responsible to the Cabinet, which did not know of its existence.

The agreement came to an end when the Peel Government fell in 1846, and Palmerston succeeded Aberdeen as Foreign Secretary. Of this there is no doubt, though Mr. Puryear argues that it survived because it was transmitted to each successive Foreign Secretary by his retiring predecessor. Palmerston had firmly rejected certain Russian overtures in 1841 which would have bound him in unforeseen contingencies; and it is not therefore likely that he would permit an 'agreement', of the very kind to which he objected, to be fathered on him. Only by a further exchange of letters could he have been bound to the Nesselrode Memorandum: and no such exchange took place. The evidence of events speaks even more eloquently; for, during the Russo-British quarrel over the 'Refugee Question' in 1849, every tenet of the 1844 'agreement' was utterly contradicted. The position with regard to the Derby Government of 1852 is even clearer: for both Derby and Malmesbury declared in Parliament (31 March 1854) that, though they had read the Nesselrode Memorandum, they had never been bound by its terms. The Memorandum, therefore, when in the hands of subsequent Governments, had changed its character. It had become merely a statement of policy, or a series of pious aspirations; both binding Russia only, and not England. The transactions of 1844 have thus no organic connection

with the Seymour Conversations. The only connection is that Nicholas, having once come to a sort of agreement with certain influential British Ministers, was not unjustifiably confident in 1853 that agreement might again be reached; for the unhappy memories of 1849 had not entirely obliterated the happy memories of 1844. Apart from whether Nicholas was, early in 1853, guilty of a scheme for plotting the destruction of Turkey in concert with Britain, he must certainly be absolved from the graver charge of having worked consistently for that end since 1844.

In December 1852, Nicholas's old fear, that Turkey was about to disintegrate, was revived by the revolt in Montenegro, and by the exacerbation of the dispute about the Holy Places. He thought that the time was ripe for overtures to Britain, and sent a memorandum to this effect to his Chancellor, Count Nesselrode. Nesselrode (29 December 1852) sounded Seymour, the British ambassador, on the subject, and received a discouraging reply.¹ On 1 January 1853, he therefore wrote a long memorandum designed to dissuade Nicholas from his resolve.² His advice, though wise and far-sighted, was not taken. Meanwhile, in England, the Derby Government had fallen, on 17 December 1852; Aberdeen had succeeded in forming a Ministry on 28 December 1852; and official news of his success reached St. Petersburg on 6 January 1853.³ Hence, when Nicholas first sketched the policy of making overtures to Britain, he did not know that it would be an Aberdeen Government to which his communication would be addressed: his motive was an honest desire to prevent a European war on the Eastern Question, and not a belief that his old friend Aberdeen would be susceptible to bribes in the form of Turkish provinces. At most, it may be hazarded that he might have

¹ Public Record Office, F.O. 65/424, no. 3: Seymour to Malmesbury, 1 Jan. 1853.

² Zaionchkovskii, *op. cit.*, i. 354 *seqq.*

³ All the dates in this paper are given in the New Style, those from Russian documents having been modified accordingly.

been more willing to take Nesselrode's excellent advice to refrain from overtures had Aberdeen not succeeded in forming a Ministry.

Early in January 1853, the Czar attempted to revive the conditions, and as it were the atmosphere, of friendship between Russia and Britain which had existed in 1844, and the famous 'Conversations' between him and Seymour began. Nicholas declared that Turkey was in such a disorganised condition that her fall appeared imminent; and that some 'ulterior system' ought to be sketched to provide for such an eventuality. Seymour replied that the British Government was generally unwilling to enter upon engagements regarding uncertain contingencies; but, in spite of this opinion, he wrote to the new Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, that the Czar's overtures could not with propriety be ignored. Metternich later declared that Seymour was here at fault: he should have found means to quench the negotiation at its point of origin, since the inevitable disintegration of Turkey was a well-known *idée fixe* of the Czar. It is certainly true that Nicholas had been holding this language to the monarchs and diplomats of Europe for many years; and the British Cabinet, far from being 'aghast' at his overtures, was neither surprised nor displeased. Even Seymour's suspicions were not aroused until the middle of February.

Russell replied in a dispatch (9 February) that established the policy to which Britain adhered during the whole of the negotiations. It declared that the fall of Turkey was a remote contingency, and that any two-power 'agreement' on the subject was more likely to cause war than to prevent it. So far, the British attitude was somewhat distasteful to Nicholas: but, later in the dispatch, Russell gave certain assurances that gave the Czar the liveliest satisfaction. Perhaps the most significant was a categorical declaration that Her Majesty's Government are 'ready to promise that they will enter into no agreement to provide for the contingency of the fall of Turkey without previous communication with the Emperor of Russia'. The Czar was delighted with this

declaration,¹ believing that it showed that Franco-British co-operation was impossible, in the anticipated Near Eastern troubles. The same dispatch gave him still further encouragement by referring to 'that exceptional protection' (over the Christians in Turkey) 'which his Imperial Majesty has found so burdensome and inconvenient, though no doubt prescribed by duty and sanctioned by Treaty'. Since a somewhat strained interpretation of the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji (1774) was even then in contemplation, these words must have seemed to the Czar a pledge of British quiescence. They sorely troubled Justin McCarthy, who writes; 'It was Lord John Russell, who, inadvertently no doubt, made this admission.' Some such lame explanation is certainly necessary if the view that the Conversations were an odious plot laid by Nicholas is to be maintained. In reality, Lord John's 'admission' is fully in harmony with the policy followed by the British Cabinet until the end of May 1853.

The further Russo-British correspondence on these lines, which lasted some two months, was of a similarly amicable character; and the Russian Chancery produced two memoranda summarising the points upon which both sides imagined some sort of agreement had been reached since January 1853. The Czar throughout expressed his intention of maintaining Turkey as long as possible; but if this should prove impracticable (and he did not believe that the end could be long delayed), some partition scheme seemed the only possible method of disposing of the Turkish inheritance. This partition proposal was the merest *pis aller*; and, in a private note, Nicholas described it as 'the least bad of all the bad combinations'. If the worst came to the worst, Nicholas told Seymour, Russia would not object to the seizure of Crete and Egypt by the British. Seymour did not

¹ He wrote beside it: 'C'est une assurance précieuse, car elle prouve quelle parfaite identité existe entre l'Angleterre et la Russie: c'est là ce qui rend si facile à marcher de front dans les prévisions qu'il s'agit d'établir.'—Zaionchkovskii, *op. cit.*, i. 359-62.

like this, but there is no reason for doubting the Czar's word when he declared again and again that the maintenance of the Porte was preferable to any partition. The British Cabinet certainly did not doubt him in the first half of 1853: and Greville, when indiscreetly shown the 'partition-proposal' by Clarendon, wrote that the Czar's views were 'wise and moderate'. Seymour's suspicions were not shared by his home Government, and a brief but cordial *entente* ensued. The British Ministers received from Nicholas the assurance that he would do his best to maintain the *status quo* in Turkey; and in return they promised Nicholas to make no forward move in the Eastern Question without a previous concert. Less than a year later, Clarendon wrote to Reeve: 'Pray remark the last Memorandum of the Emperor, which is as satisfactory a termination to a correspondence as I ever remember.' The negotiation therefore ended in an atmosphere of mutual good-will. More than that, during the course of the correspondence the Czar's assurances had been acted upon. When Rose, the *chargé d'affaires* at Constantinople, nervous at the behaviour of Prince Menschikov, the newly-arrived Russian envoy, sent for the British fleet, the Cabinet confirmed Vice-Admiral Dundas's refusal to sail from Malta. The Russians were overjoyed, and the French fleet set off for Salamis alone. A Franco-British *entente* seemed less likely than ever.

The opinions of Seymour himself are of importance, since a Government is always to some degree influenced by the views of its diplomatic agents. Seymour was, at the beginning of 1853, very nervous on the subject of Russian military preparations. He therefore welcomed Nicholas's first professions of moderation, and was to some extent reassured by them. On 12 January, soon after the first Conversation, he wrote privately to Russell:

Although the Emperor walks about in a helmet, sleeps on a camp bed, and occasionally talks gunpowder, he is not more keen on war than his neighbours. He occasionally takes a precipitate step; but as reflection arrives, reason and Count Nesselrode make themselves

heard. He is not sorry to be able to recede if he can do so without a loss of dignity.¹

During the course of February, Seymour's attitude changed. On the 10th he could still write to Russell, 'My hope, my belief is that great sacrifices would, if necessary, be made by the Emperor to retain the friendship of the English Government'; but by the 18th renewed reports of warlike preparations on the part of Russia had convinced him that the position was critical.² In reporting the third and fourth conversations a few days later, he voiced these suspicions strenuously, and urged that the negotiation should be brought to an end. On 25 March he frankly considered the 'remote contingency' of war with Russia on the Eastern Question; while, in England, France was still the only power with which war seemed at all possible. When Menschikov arrived at Constantinople, and Rose sent for the British fleet, Seymour's excitement knew no bounds; and on 7 April he wrote privately to Clarendon in a most violently anti-Russian sense. Seymour was thus anti-Russian at a time when the British Cabinet and the Russian Government were still on the most amicable terms: and, presuming that the Czar's assurances contained some real security against Russian aggression, Seymour had ceased to be a suitable minister for the maintenance of cordial relations. It is interesting to notice that both Seymour and Rose were much more bellicose in tone than Stratford de Redcliffe, who has been so frequently accused of consciously working for war.

The question naturally arises: Was Nicholas sincere in his assurances that he desired the *status quo* in Turkey? General opinion in Britain and France has declared him guilty of a deep-laid plot for the destruction of Turkey; but this is borne out neither by his previous career nor by his private expressions of policy in 1853. He undoubtedly did desire to maintain the *status quo* in Turkey, though he thought that its maintenance would in the long run prove impossible.

¹ G. P. Gooch, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii. 145.

² P.R.O., F.O. 65/424, nos. 68, 83.

The difference between Nicholas and his Chancellor was that Nesselrode saw no reason why Turkey should not continue to exist.¹ By *status quo*, Nicholas envisaged a Turkey dominated by Russia—for within those words he included the wide interpretation of the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji comprised in Menschikov's demands. When on the brink of war, he admitted to Orlov that he had been deceived as to the rights over the Christians in Turkey granted to him by that Treaty: had he not been misled, he declared, his policy would have been a different one.² Nicholas's mistake was less in the nature of the demands he authorised Menschikov to make than in the secrecy in which they had been shrouded; yet even this was in the Russian diplomatic tradition, for Russo-Turkish affairs were always regarded as of a peculiarly 'domestic' nature.³

The brief understanding that resulted from the Seymour Conversations was therefore based on a misunderstanding. When, in July 1853, the Russian occupation of the Principalities pricked this diplomatic bubble, both Nicholas and the British Ministers considered themselves to have been deceived. The Russian attitude was that Britain was in the wrong for doubting the Czar's word. The British attitude was that they were forced into disbelief of his good intentions, since his acts had ceased to be in harmony with his promises. To this argument the Russians countered that the Czar had behaved magnanimously to the Turks on previous occasions, and had saved the Sultan from Mehemet Ali, and that the Principalities had been occupied before without danger to the existence of the Porte. On 30 October 1853, Nicholas wrote to Queen Victoria, lamenting that a quarrel should have arisen on a subject '*où ma parole est engagée vis-à-vis de Votre Majesté, comme je crois celle du Gouvernement Anglais engagée de même vis-à-vis de moi*'. Victoria could only

¹ P.R.O., F.O. 65/425, no. 137: Seymour to Clarendon, 24 March 1853.

² *Ibid.*, 65/445, no. 176: Seymour to Clarendon, 21 Feb. 1854.

³ E. G. Buchanan to Palmerston, 13 March 1849, in Charles Sproxtton's *Palmerston and the Hungarian Revolution* (1919), pp. 15-16, 133.

reply that, in international matters, the royal word was not enough: to which Nicholas retorted that '*rien ne peut être plus sacré*'.¹ This correspondence shows that there was a complete misunderstanding as to the nature and validity of the engagements resulting from the Seymour Conversations, as well as on the subject of their content. Nicholas utterly failed to appreciate the constitutional position in Britain. Nesselrode had given him excellent advice, so there was no excuse for his having done so. But the British Ministers are perhaps also to blame for having encouraged the Czar with fair words, and for not having made the limits of their power perfectly clear. If Nicholas was singularly willing to deceive himself, the British Ministers were singularly unwilling to undeceive him. A study of these negotiations does not reveal the Czar as a plotter: it reveals him as a blunderer, whose blunders were equalled by those of the British Ministers. Nicholas and Nesselrode on the one hand, the British Ministers on the other, strove from the first for a peaceable settlement of the Eastern Question. Mutual misunderstanding was followed by mutual recrimination, until the whole episode was merged in the pathetic 'drift' towards the Crimean War.

POSTSCRIPT ²

(by Harold Temperley and G. B. Henderson)

Since the publication of this historical revision, some important relevant material has been secured from the MSS. of Clarendon's private papers. On 20 March 1853 Lord John Russell—hearing reports of preparations at Sebastopol—wrote to Clarendon that

the Emperor of Russia is clearly bent on accomplishing the destruction of Turkey, and *he must be resisted*.

He also wrote that

in that case the overture made to Seymour by the Emperor must have been meant to fulfil the pledge given to Lord Aberdeen that he wd not

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria* (edn. 1908), ii. 459-64.

² *History*, June 1934, pp. 39-41.

attempt the division or destruction of Turkey without previous communication with us. In case I am right in this conjecture, the crisis is very serious.

Russell's conjecture was certainly wrong, for we now know that Nicholas had thought of approaching Britain before Aberdeen came into office [*Supra*: p. 5], and that the coincidence of dates deceived contemporaries, as it has since deceived Dr. Puryear and others. Russell's goodwill towards Russia was thus simulated, at the very time when the British Cabinet was entering into an entente with her. Aberdeen's goodwill was real: but Russell seems to have thought that there was merely an off chance that Nicholas was an honest man—a chance that was worth taking. The Cabinet as a whole was more friendly; and three days after Russell's furious letters, Clarendon sent a dispatch to St. Petersburg saying that Nicholas's assurances would 'tend to strengthen the alliance between the two countries. . . .'¹

Even Palmerston thought that Russell's suspicions were unreasonable. On 11 April 1853 he wrote to Clarendon the Emperor of Russia is ambitious and grasping, but he is a Gentleman, and I should be slow to disbelieve his positive Denial of Such Things as those in question,—at all events we are right in accepting his assertions. . . .

This strikes the note of the whole British attitude. Seymour himself, while blaming the Russians, always exonerated Nicholas.

'L'Empereur N.,' he wrote later, 'a été la victime de faux renseignements. Pas plus que moi il ne voulait la guerre, mais les conseillers en se faisant courtisans l'ont placé dans une position dont il ne pouvait se tirer qu'en faisant jouer le sabre.'²

Another interesting Russell letter appears in Clarendon's private papers. On 29 May 1853 Russell wrote that 'I think it not impossible that the Emperor of Russia, having failed

¹ No. 23: F.O. 65/420. Where no reference is given, quotations are from Clarendon's private papers.

² Seymour to d'Alleon, 15 Dec. 1854. [Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Wien: Pol. Arch. Russland x: Fasc. 36.]

with us, may offer to France, Egypt and Candia as her part of the spoils of Turkey.' This is one of the earliest examples of the interpretation of the Seymour Conversations as an attempt to corrupt Britain by offering her bribes. During the war it became the regular and reputable interpretation of those 'Conversations', which it was unpatriotic to doubt; and it has continued to mislead historians. This misinterpretation is perhaps best characterised by Prokesch-Osten, an expert on Eastern affairs:

If people want to make out that it is a crime on the Czar of Russia's part, that he proposed a peaceful and friendly negotiation about the eventuality of the fall of the Turkish Empire, it is a proof of their own stupidity. No blame is attributable to this intention, but at most to the ineptitude of approaching the question secretly.¹

The historical revision drew attention to the fact that, in the Parliamentary Papers, the title of the Nesselrode Memorandum had been altered from '*during*' to '*subsequently to*'. It is now clear from a letter of Aberdeen's that this alteration was due to no carelessness or mistake. The new evidence shows that Aberdeen wrote thus to Clarendon on the subject on 16 March 1854:

I return the Russian Memorandum. As we profess to give everything, I see no good reason for suppressing it although it has no necessary connection with the recent negotiation. You had better consult Lord John upon the subject.

If the Memorandum be given I think it should be printed *after* Seymour's Correspondence, and as a separate Paper. It might be entitled: 'Memorandum by Count Nesselrode, delivered to H.M. Govt and founded on communications received from the Emperor subsequently to H.I.M.'s visit to England in June 1844.' I should be very glad to see what you propose to print, before finally settled.

There is here an evident intention to mislead the public. Aberdeen gives no reason for the alteration. But at the time of the conversations of June 1844, Aberdeen had assured the French that Nicholas '*ne m'a ni proposé un plan ni laissé voir*

¹ Prokesch-Osten to Ficquelmont, 26 March 1854: *Aus den Briefen des Grafen Prokesch von Osten, 1849-1855* [Vienna, 1896]: pp. 367-70.

un projet applicable aux diverses éventualités qu'on peut prévoir':¹ and the alteration may well have been made to prevent awkward questions from France, now allied to Britain. Sins of omission are frequent in all Parliamentary Papers: but sins of commission are sufficiently rare for this to deserve special notice.

We think that the evidence from these new papers is sufficiently important to add as a postscript to the historical revision.

¹ Aberdeen, in conversation with St. Aulaire, 10 June 1844: Guizot: *Mémoires* (Paris, 1858-67) vi. pp. 210-13.

EIN BEITRAG ZUR ENTWICKLUNG DER NAPOLEONISCHEN IDEEN ÜBER POLEN UND ITALIEN WÄHREND DES KRIMKRIEGES.¹

Die Jahre 1854 und 1855 waren in der europäischen Geschichte von entscheidender Bedeutung. Viel später erklärte Bismarck: 'nach seiner Meinung war Russland berechtigt, das verräterische und undankbare Österreich von 1854 nicht so bald zu vergessen. Österreich war der erste Staat, welcher das System des Caren Nikolaus vernichtete, ein System, dem Europa dreissig Jahre Frieden verdankte.'² Es ist nicht Sache des Historikers, hier ein Urteil über Recht oder Unrecht zu fällen. Jedoch lässt es sich nicht in Abrede stellen, dass Österreich im Jahre 1854 eine Stellung einnahm, welche das System von 1815 definitiv niederschlug. Dieses System hatte den Zweck, Frankreich zurückzuhalten, und die Auflösung desselben hatte die Einigung Italiens und Deutschlands, sowie auch die Katastrophe von 1870 zur Folge.

Die Diplomatie während des Krimkrieges ist merkwürdigerweise von Historikern, deren Hauptinteresse sich mehr dem Ursprung des Kampfes zuwandte, sehr vernachlässigt worden. Erst jetzt geht die Periode des Krimkrieges aus dem Gebiete der politischen Streitfragen in das der Geschichte ein.

Umfangreiches Quellenmaterial ist bis vor kurzem der Forschung vorenthalten worden. Auch war es beim Studium der zugänglichen Quellen nur möglich, Berichte zu finden, welche für die Westmächte günstig ausfielen. Von dieser Seite stammte meist die Darstellung der Ereignisse.

¹ Reprinted from *Zeitschrift für osteuropäische Geschichte*, viii (4), 1934. Die Übersetzung dieser Arbeit hat meine Mutter übernommen und ich möchte ihr meinen besten Dank aussprechen.

² J. Y. Simpson: 'The Saburov Memoirs', Cambridge 1929, S. 120.

Zwar versuchten russische Polemiker und Geschichtsschreiber hierin das Gleichgewicht herzustellen, was ihnen gewöhnlich durch übertriebenen Eifer misslang. Gorjainovs 'Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles' (Paris 1910), zum Beispiel, ist nicht nur einseitig, sondern auch unzuverlässig; es verwirrt Daten und Tatsachen, dass es fast wertlos für ernste Forschung ist. Friedjungs 'Der Krimkrieg und die österreichische Politik' (2. Aufl., Stuttgart und Berlin, 1911) ist geschickter und gerechter, aber seitdem es möglich ist, in den Archiven Wiens zu forschen, hat es sich gezeigt, dass das Buch nicht so reichhaltig und in manchen Fällen fehlerhaft ist. Götz Krusemarcks 'Württemberg und der Krimkrieg' (Halle a/S. 1932) stellt eine vortreffliche Monographie dar. Derartige Beiträge von Archiven der kleineren Staaten geben wohl teilweise eine Erklärung der Hauptfragen, können dieselben jedoch nicht lösen. Die Diplomatie des Krimkrieges bietet deshalb noch immer ergebnisreiches Material für Nachforschungen. Es erscheint immer noch rätselhaft, warum Österreich sich nur halb an Frankreich und England anschloss und sich dadurch die Feindschaft beider Staaten zuzog.

Eine der Hauptschwierigkeiten der Periode lag darin, dass so wichtige Probleme von wenig bedeutenden Staatsmännern behandelt wurden. Keine der Grossmächte verfügte über einen Staatsmann vom Format eines Castlereagh oder Metternich, Cavour oder Bismarck. Zu den weniger hervorragenden Politikern seiner Zeit gehört Ernst II von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, dessen Beziehungen zu Leopold von Belgien, Prinz Albert von England, Napoleon III und Kaiser Franz Josef ihm eine Bedeutung gaben, die er anderweitig nicht besass. Er besuchte im März 1854 Napoleon III und im Mai Franz Josef. Die stattgefundenen Unterredungen bieten wichtige Auskünfte über die Politik Frankreichs und Österreichs. Berichte hierüber waren bisher nur in den Aufzeichnungen von Ernst II 'Aus meinem Leben' zu finden, die etwa dreissig Jahre nach diesen grossen Ereignissen in Buchform erschienen sind.

Ernst II leitet seinen Bericht über die Unterredungen mit Napoleon III mit folgender Bemerkung ein: 'Die nachfolgenden Mittheilungen über meine Gespräche mit dem Kaiser Napoleon sind damals unter dem unmittelbaren Eindruck niedergeschrieben worden. Bei der Wiedergabe hier habe ich deshalb geglaubt, nicht daran ändern zu sollen; was stilistisch vielleicht glätter geworden wäre, hätte dafür an Treue und Ursprünglichkeit einbüßen können.'¹

Als Ernst sein Buch schrieb, machte er tatsächlich von der Denkschrift Gebrauch, die er seinerzeit verfasst hatte. Eine Abschrift seiner Erinnerungen und später auch eine Wiedergabe der Unterredung mit Franz Josef schickte er an seinen Bruder Albert, der sie im Königlichen Archiv zu Windsor aufbewahrte.²

Es ist deshalb möglich, hier das Buch mit dem Material, das bei seiner Abfassung benutzt wurde, zu vergleichen, ein Verfahren, welches ebenso wertvoll wie selten für den Geschichtsschreiber ist. Der Vergleich zeigt, dass Ernst II weit davon entfernt war, den Bericht genau so wiederzugeben, wie er ihn ursprünglich abfasste. Die Änderungen und Unterlassungen sind so schwerwiegend, dass sie eine neue Darlegung der Unterredungen von Ernst in ihrer ursprünglichen Wiedergabe rechtfertigen.

Der wichtigste Teil der Unterredung mit Napoleon behandelt die Beziehungen Frankreichs zu Österreich.

'Was Östreich betrifft', schrieb Ernst in seiner Denkschrift, 'so habe ich mich wenig auf eine Discussion über dasselbe eingelassen. Ich habe mich begnügt, die Überzeugung zu gewinnen, dass der Kaiser Östreichs sicher zu sein glaubt. Auf der einen Seite scheint es (so sprach er sich ausdrücklich aus) als sicher anzunehmen zu sein, dass, wenn Östreich nicht mit dem Westen geht, der Krieg das un-

¹ Ernst II: 'Aus meinem Leben', 6 Aufl., Berlin 1889, ii. S. 135.

² Durch allergnädigste Erlaubnis Seiner Majestät des Königs von England ist es dem Verfasser gestattet worden, Auszüge aus Dokumenten in dem Königlichen Archiv zu Windsor zu machen. Die zwei Denkschriften sind nummeriert: G 11, No. 77 und G 13, No. 140.

fehlbare Resultat sein werde. Der Kaiser erklärt zugleich, dass die Lombardei eine stets klaffende Wunde sei und das früher oder später in Italien eine allgemeine Bewegung ausbrechen werde. Auf der anderen Seite erklärte er mir, wenn Östreich sich ihm anschliesse, so werde er demselben behülflich sein, dessen Stellung in Italien zu consolidieren.'

Diese Ausdrücke enthielten eine entschiedene Drohung Österreich gegenüber. Ernsts Folgerung lautet:

'Östreich wird nur zwischen dem Krieg mit dem Westen oder mit dem Osten zu wählen haben. Im ersteren Falle bildet Italien den Angriffspunct, im letzteren kann es seinen Einfluss in Italien und an der Donau ausdehnen . . . Gewiss wird der Kaiser nie eine Revolution, die auf Frankreich zurückschlagen könnte, befördern. Ob er aber dazu eine Insurgirung Italiens gegen Östreich oder die Zulassung einer solchen rechnen würde, scheint mir zweifelhaft.'

Eine solche Drohung unterliegt keinem Zweifel, doch ist sie in dem Buch kaum mehr als eine Andeutung gegeben. Die Bedrohung der österreichischen Herrschaft in Italien war nur ein Teil des gut ausgedachten Planes, um Österreich teils durch Einschüchterungen, teils durch Schmeicheleien in eine feindlichere Stellung gegen Russland zu bringen.

Als Ernst II im Mai 1854 Wien besuchte, beeilte er sich dem österreichischen Kaiser und dessen Ministern seine Eindrücke über die Politik Napoleons mitzuteilen. Die französische Haltung Italien gegenüber war natürlich nicht willkommen. Minister Bach war besonders misstrauisch:

'Er bezog sich besonders auf die Angriffe der piedmontesischen Presse . . . etc. Man fürchte davon freilich nichts, man habe eine gute Stellung und Armee in Italien, doch werde dieser Zustand unleidlich. Frankreich trage die Schuld davon, der Kaiser brauche nur ein Wort zu sprechen, so würden diese Stimmen verstummen. Der Minister suchte ferner zu deduciren, wie der Kaiser von Frankreich gezwungen werde, so und nicht anders zu handeln. Er könne und werde die Idee einer Vergrößerung in Italien nicht auf-

geben. Östreich aber werde sich von keiner seiner Provinzen trennen.’¹

Es wird sich später herausstellen, dass Ernst in diesen Zeilen und anderweitig die Furcht Österreichs vor dem französischen Einfluss in Italien unterschätzte. Es war leicht für ihn, sich selbst und andere zu täuschen. Ein grosser Teil der Denkschrift behandelt die Stellung Deutschlands von einem für Österreich höchst optimistischen Standpunkt.

‘Ich hatte es mir zur Aufgabe gestellt, darauf hinzuwirken, dass so schnell als möglich die Staaten des deutschen Bundes zu Rüstungen veranlasst und die Action selbst hineingebracht würden, und ich habe fast in jeder Unterredung mit dem Kaiser, den Ministern und den leitenden Militärs diesen Gegenstand zur Sprache gebracht.’

Diese übertriebenen Hoffnungen standen in keinem Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit. Ernst überschätzte seinen eigenen Einfluss, was vielleicht nicht unnatürlich für einen kleinen Fürsten war, und vermittelte gleichzeitig den Österreichern eine falsche Ansicht über die Situation. Seine Berichte trugen wenig dazu bei, seinem viel fähigeren Bruder Albert und seinem Onkel Leopold in deren Politik behilflich zu sein. Wenig erscheint hiervon in ‘Aus meinem Leben’, da diese Torheit lange vor der Veröffentlichung zutage trat.

Von viel grösserer Bedeutung waren Ernsts Erörterungen über die polnische Frage.

‘... In Betreff Polens war es mir nicht möglich den Gr. Buol zu einer Anerkennung der Nothwendigkeit der Wiederherstellung zu bewegen. Da er mit mir darüber einverstanden war, dass man sich nicht bloß mit der Räumung der Donaufürstenthümer begnügen könne, sondern von Russland Garantien gegen fernere Übergriffe fordern müsse so suchte ich der Vorstellung Eingang zu verschaffen, dass die einzige Garantie die man sich verschaffen könne die Besetzung und Wiederherstellung Polens sei.

Er erwiderte mir: Wer solle Polen haben? Östreich

¹ In *Aus meinem Leben* sind diese Zeilen fast genau so wiedergegeben.

wolle es nicht, ebensowenig Preussen. Also eine neue Dynastie. Welche sie auch sei, nach wenigen Jahren werde Polen ein Heerd der Revolution sein und schliesslich in Allianz mit Russland treten.'

Ernsts eigene Bemerkung zum Schluss war:

'Würde man Österreich überzeugen können, dass die Verwandlung der polnischen Provinzen Russlands in einen selbständigen Staat keine Gefahr für den ferneren Besitz der polnischen Provinzen Österreichs hat und dass dieser Staat einige Garantien der Dauer und der Ordnung habe, so glaube ich würde Österreich bereitwillig auf jene Idee eingehen.'

Diese Ansicht Ernsts war ganz ohne Grund und ist wohl auf sein optimistisches Temperament zurückzuführen. Der Gedanke allein an ein selbständiges Polen rief die höchste Bestürzung in allen Kreisen Österreichs hervor. Ernsts Bemerkungen über Polen, welche nach den Ereignissen des Krimkrieges und der polnischen Revolution 1863 als töricht erscheinen mussten, sind in seinem Buch nicht erwähnt. Dessen ungeachtet waren diese Bemerkungen von einiger Bedeutung im Jahre 1854, besonders da Ernst fast als Abgesandter der Westmächte galt.

Was das Problem Italien und Polen betraf, befand sich Österreich in einer schwierigen Lage. Unterstützte es Russland, so lief es Gefahr, von Frankreich angegriffen zu werden und revolutionäre Strömungen in der Lombardei hervorzurufen. Unterstützte es die Westmächte, musste es fürchten, dass eine Wiederherstellung Polens den Verlust seiner eigenen polnischen Provinzen zur Folge haben könnte. Revolution war deshalb in jedem Falle eine wirkliche Gefahr. Österreich musste sich mehr und mehr auf die zentralisierende Politik Bachs und auf die Vergrösserung seiner eigenen Macht verlassen. Die Vertretung eigener Interessen an der unteren Donau musste es in Feindseligkeiten mit Russland verwickeln.

'Es ist hart,' schrieb Franz Josef später, 'gegen frühere Freunde auftreten zu müssen, allein in der Politik ist dies

nicht anders möglich, und im Orient ist Russland jederzeit unser natürlicher Feind. Mit der so gefürchteten Revolution werden wir auch ohne Russland fertig werden, und ein Land, welches in einem Jahr 200,000 Rekruten ohne Anstand aushebt und ein Anlehen von über 500 Millionen fl. im Inland zustande bringt, ist noch nicht gar so revolutionskrank.¹

Die Zuversicht des jungen Kaisers wurde jedoch nicht ganz von seinen Ministern geteilt. Feindseligkeiten zwischen Österreich und Russland hätten unvermeidlich Österreich mit Frankreich und England, welche mit Russland Krieg führten, eng verbinden müssen, und diese Verbündeten waren wegen ihrer revolutionären Tendenzen gefürchtet. Daher die Politik Buols, das österreichische Bündnis dazu zu benutzen, eine Definition der Kriegsziele von den Westmächten zu erhalten. Diese Definition hätte beschränkt sein und alle revolutionären Ziele ausschliessen müssen. Ehe Österreich daran denken könne, sich an dem Kriege zu beteiligen, müsse es sicher sein, dass es ein Krieg um des politischen Gleichgewichts und nicht ein Krieg um 'Napoleonischer Ideen' willen sei.

Ganz abgesehen von Ernsts Worten hatte Österreich guten Grund zu glauben, dass die Kriegsabsichten der Westmächte revolutionärer Natur seien. Seymour (britischer Botschafter in St. Petersburg) schlug bereits im Februar 1854 vor, im Falle eines Kriegsausbruches an das Nationalgefühl Polens, Schwedens und Deutschlands zu appellieren. Russland könnte in dieser Weise zurückgedrängt werden und 'eine grosse Wohltat würde dadurch dem übrigen Europa zuteil'.² Solche Gesinnungen waren dem Prime Minister Aberdeen nicht willkommen aber sie standen in vollständigem Einklang mit den ehrgeizigen Plänen Palmerstons, des Ministers des Innern. Am 19 März 1854

¹ Franz Josef an seine Mutter, 8 Oktober 1854 (Franz Schnürer: 'Briefe Kaiser Franz Josephs I an seine Mutter, 1838-72', München 1930, S. 232).

² Bericht Nr. 140, Seymour an den Aussenminister Clarendon, 11 Februar 1854. Public Record Office, F.O. 65/445.

schrieb Palmerston eine Denkschrift, in der er sein 'beau idéal' entwickelte. Er wollte:

'Åland und Finnland an Schweden zurückgeben. Einige der deutschen Ostseeprovinzen von Russland an Preussen abtreten. Ein substantielles Königreich Polen als Pufferstaat zwischen Deutschland und Russland wieder aufrichten. Moldau und Wallachei und das Donaudelta an Österreich abgeben. Die Lombardei und Venedig von österreichischer Herrschaft befreien und entweder ganz selbständig machen oder mit Piedmont vereinigen. Die Krim, Tscherkessien und Georgien aus den Händen Russlands reissen; die Krim und Georgien an die Türkei abtreten; Tscherkessien entweder zum selbständigen Staat erheben oder mit der Türkei mit dem Sultan als Oberlehnsherrn verbinden. Solche Ereignisse wären natürlich nur möglich, wenn eine Union zwischen Schweden, Preussen und Österreich mit England, Frankreich und der Türkei bestände, und setzen voraus, dass Russland eine grosse Niederlage erlitt. Solche Ereignisse sind jedoch nicht unmöglich und wir sollten sie nicht vollständig aus dem Auge lassen.'¹

Dies blieb Palmerstons 'beau idéal'. Insbesondere war er ein Freund von Polens Unabhängigkeit. Im August 1854 schrieb er höchst verdriesslich: 'Ist es möglich, dass Aberdeen sich ungünstig über die Idee einer Wiederherstellung Polens als Königreich geäußert hat!! Ich hoffe und glaube, dass dies nicht der Fall ist. . . .'² Der Einfluss Palmerstons in dieser Zeit wurde oft übertrieben, und Sidney Herbert, ein Kabinettsminister, schrieb: 'Obgleich er manchmal über Polen gesprochen, so hat er doch nie seine Ideen über die Karte von Europa dem Kabinett vorgelegt.'³ Er hatte jedoch die öffentliche Meinung auf seiner Seite

¹ Memorandum Lord Palmerstons vom 19 März 1854: G. P. Gooch: *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell* (London 1925), ii. S. 160 f.

² Palmerston an Clarendon, 22 August 1854: Private Clarendon Papers. Hierfür ist der Verfasser Herrn Professor Temperley zu grossem Dank verpflichtet.

³ Sidney Herbert an Aberdeen, 5 Februar 1855: Lord Stanmore: *Sidney Herbert*, London 1906, i, S. 260.

und blieb immer als eine gefährliche Möglichkeit im Hintergrunde.

Napoleon III zeigte die grösste Beharrlichkeit in bezug auf Polen, und es verging während des Krieges kaum ein Monat, in dem er sich nicht über diesen Gegenstand aussprach. Am 21 Mai 1854 schrieb Hübner:

‘Napoleon . . . glaubt, dass der Krieg mit Russland ein allgemeiner werden wird und mit einer Koalition Europas gegen diese Macht enden dürfte. Sollte Russland die Sachen bis zum Äussersten treiben, so wird die Notwendigkeit eintreten, das Grossherzogtum Warschau wieder herzustellen, dabei aber Österreich und Preussen den Besitz ihrer polnischen Provinzen zu garantieren.’¹

Die ‘Garantie’, von der Napoleon als grossmütiges Anerbieten spricht, war wenig vertrauenerweckend für Buol. Dann, am 7 September, schrieb Napoleon an Prinz Albert, dass ‘er schon mit dem kleinsten Anfang zufrieden wäre, und völlig befriedigt mit dem Grossherzogtum Warschau’.² Kurz nachdem fragte er Cowley, ‘etwas schroff, ob Ihrer Majestäts Regierung Einwendungen gegen eine Wiederherstellung des polnischen Königreichs machen würde’. Cowley erwiderte, dass ‘ein derartiger Plan nicht angenommen werden könnte, wenn beabsichtigt wäre, die bestehenden Verträge aufzuheben und die Wiederherstellung dieses Königreichs als Zweck des Krieges zu benutzen’.³ Wie schon erwähnt, begünstigten einige englische Staatsminister diese Pläne und hatten darin die öffentliche Meinung hinter sich. Die Kabinette waren jedoch genügend konservativ, diese zu verwerfen: und die französische Union selbst wurde oft mit

¹ Hübner: *Neun Jahre der Erinnerungen eines österreichischen Botschafters in Paris im zweiten Kaiserreich*, 1851-59, Berlin 1904, I. S. 141. Die späteren Projekte Napoleons betreffs grösserer Veränderungen der Karte von Europa sind wohl bekannt. Siehe, z. B., Fürst Metternich an Graf Rechberg, 23 Februar 1863 (Hermann Oncken: *Die Rhein-Politik Kaiser Napoleon III*, Bd. I).

² Denkschrift Prinz Alberts: Sir Theodore Martin: *Life of the Prince Consort*, London 1875-80, iii. S. 120.

³ Bericht Nr. 1228, Cowley an Clarendon, 9 Oktober 1854, Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1024.

Misstrauen betrachtet. Schon während des Krieges konnte ein englischer Kabinettsminister den Wunsch aussprechen, sein Vaterland 'frei zu sehen, nicht von einem Bündnis mit Frankreich, sondern von dieser engen Verbindung, welche jetzt besteht'.¹ Die Furcht der Konservativen im allgemeinen und der Österreicher im besonderen, dass sich England in revolutionäre Pläne ziehen lassen könnte, erwies sich als unbegründet. Aber Englands wiederholte Weigerungen, die Pläne Napoleons anzunehmen, hatten für dasselbe unglückliche Folgen. Während des Jahres 1855 verlor Napoleon das Interesse am Kriege. Ein Krieg am Rhein würde populär sein; ein Krieg über politische Fragen im Osten würde dies nie sein. Sobald Napoleon sich in seiner 'militärischen Ehre' befriedigt fühlte, war er gern bereit, Frieden zu schliessen.

Im Jahre 1854 fuhr Napoleon fort, sich für Pläne von grösserer Bedeutung zu interessieren. Die Furcht der Österreicher über die Berichte Ernsts II, sowie auch über anderweitige Nachrichten hatten bedeutenden Einfluss auf ihre Politik. Westmorland, der englische Botschafter in Wien, schrieb: 'Ich bin sicher, dass die Sprache, welche Louis Napoleon dem Herzog von Coburg gegenüber gebraucht hat, den Kaiser von Österreich zu einer Unschlüssigkeit in seinen Äusserungen bewegt.'² Als deshalb Österreich am 8 August sein Ziel erreicht hatte, indem es die Kriegszwecke der Verbündeten auf die Definition der vier Punkte beschränkte, zog es sich von dem Bündnis mit England und Frankreich, welches gleichzeitig unterzeichnet werden sollte, zurück. Da jetzt die Russen die Fürstentümer freigaben, konnte Österreich hoffen, erst die Endzwecke des Krieges zu beschränken und dann den Krieg zu beendigen, ohne selbst daran teilgenommen zu haben. Dieser Politik gemäss, benachrichtigte Buol sofort die Russen, dass 'on

¹ Argyll an Gladstone, 24 Oktober 1855: Argyll: *Autobiography and Memoirs*, London 1906, ii. S. 39.

² Westmorland an Lady Westmorland, 4 Juni 1854: *The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland*, herausgegeben von ihrer Tochter, Lady Rose Weigall, London 1909, S. 215.

peut compter que des vues ambitieuses et des prétentions exagérées . . . ne trouveraient jamais de l'appui chez nous'.¹ Hätten ausgedehnte Pläne von einigen Staatsmännern der Verbündeten dazu benutzt werden können, Russland so in Furcht zu versetzen, dass es bereit gewesen wäre, einen Frieden auf Grund der beschränkteren vier Punkte anzunehmen, so hätte diese allgemeine Verwirrung höchst zufriedenstellend für Österreich geendet.

Russland verwarf damals die 'vier Punkte'. Österreich hatte kein Versprechen gegeben, diese Ablehnung als ein 'casus belli' anzusehen; aber England und Frankreich waren empört, dass es sich passiv verhielt. Drouyn de Lhuys, der Minister des Äusseren, gebrauchte drohende Worte. Die vier Punkte 'konnten nicht als bindend für die Westmächte betrachtet werden, wenn Österreich darauf beharrte, keine andere Hilfe als die Besetzung der Donau-Provinzen zu geben. Der Notenwechsel fand unter der Voraussetzung statt, dass ein anderer Vertrag unterzeichnet werden sollte, welcher Österreich verpflichtete, Hilfe einer solchen Art zu leisten die es ermöglichte, einen Frieden zu schliessen, wie ihn Österreich selbst als notwendig für das zukünftige Wohlergehen Europas betrachtet hatte'.² Mit anderen Worten die Westmächte würden die vier Punkte aufgeben und die Kriegsziele erweitern — vielleicht zu revolutionärer Grösse. Dies zu verhindern war Buols Ziel; und in den folgenden Monaten drängte er auf Unterhandlungen zwecks Bündnis der drei Mächte hin. Obwohl Frankreich und England einige Anhänger revolutionärer Pläne besaßen, so war jedoch in beiden Ländern das konservative Element im allgemeinen vorwiegend. Nach der Ansicht von Drouyn de Lhuys 'le grand problème est de dompter la révolution sans le secours de la Russie, et de contenir la

¹ Privatbrief: Buol an Valentin Esterhazy, österreichischer Botschafter in St. Petersburg, 10 August 1854: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien: Pol. Arch. Russland, x, Fasc. 36.

² Äusserungen Drouyn de Lhuys zu Hübner, österreichischer Botschafter in Paris. Siehe Bericht Nr. 1113: Cowley, britischer Botschafter in Paris an Clarendon, 13 September 1854: Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1002.

Russie sans le secours de la révolution'.¹ Aberdeen gleichzeitig 'désire un traité avec l'Autriche comme frein contre les exigences (et) les prétensions qui pourraient être formées si la guerre se prolonge'.² Deshalb wünschte das konservative Element in allen drei Ländern ein Bündnis, als Schutz gegen einen Krieg zur Befreiung unterdrückter Völker. Die Staatsmänner der Verbündeten hatten die 'arrière pensée', dass Österreich in den Krieg gezogen werden, Buol, dass die kriegsführenden Mächte zum Frieden überredet werden könnten. Die Verhandlungen über den Dreimächtebund sind zu kompliziert, um hier behandelt zu werden. Nach zahlreichen Entwürfen und vielen Schwierigkeiten wurde das Bündnis endlich am 2. Dezember 1854 unterschrieben. Jedoch kurz vor seiner Unterzeichnung erhielt Hübner von Buol die Anordnung:

'die Verhandlungen, die im vergangenen März wegen des Abschlusses einer Konvention gepflogen worden waren, um den territorialen Status quo und die öffentliche Ordnung in Italien während des Krieges aufrecht zu erhalten, wieder aufzunehmen. Dies ist ein unerlässlicher Zusatz zur Tripelalliance.'³

Die französische Regierung gab zu:

'dass Österreich ein Recht auf diese Forderung hätte, da der Kaiser vor einigen Monaten Hübner gesagt hatte, dass wenn Österreich auf seiten Russlands stünde, es gefasst sein müsste, sich Frankreichs unbedingte Feindschaft zuzuziehen; würde es sich aber mit Frankreich gegen Russland verbünden, könnte es stets Frankreichs Hilfe sicher sein, falls es von irgend einer Seite angegriffen würde.'⁴

¹ Bernard d'Harcourt: *Les quatre Ministères de M. Drouyn de Lhuys*, Paris 1882, S. 133.

² Privatbrief: Colloredo, österreichischer Botschafter in London, an Buol: 21. Oktober 1854: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien: Pol. Arch. England viii, Fasc. 41.

³ Hübner: 'Neun Jahre . . .', i. S. 165.

⁴ Walewski, französischer Botschafter in London, sagte dies Clarendon, 2. Dezember 1854 (Clarendon an Cowley, 5. Dezember 1854: Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1004 A: Bericht Nr. 1194).

Hübner konnte deshalb am 30 November um Mitternacht die französische Annahme des Vertrages betreffs Italien nach Wien depeschieren. Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel, dass Österreichs Annahme des Dreimächtebündnisses von Frankreichs Unterzeichnung eines weiteren Vertrages abhing, und dies mag wohl entscheidend gewesen sein, den zögernden Franz Josef zu der Annahme des Vertrages zu überreden. Die französischen Drohungen, welche durch Hübner und Ernst II nach Wien gelangten, ergaben also gute Resultate. Der Dezembervertrag hatte zwar keinen Erfolg, denn er brachte keinen Frieden, aber er versetzte wenigstens dem System der 'Heiligen Allianz' einen ausschlaggebenden Stoss und zog Österreich weiter aus dem preussischen und russischen Lager heraus. Dies war der Hauptzweck der französischen Politik und das bemerkenswerteste Resultat des Krimkrieges. 'Vous avez blessé à mort la Sainte Alliance', war eine begeisterte Bemerkung; 'vous venez de la mettre en terre, avec l'enterrement de première classe'.¹

Ungeachtet dessen, änderten weder Napoleon noch Palmerston ihre Ansichten. Am 12 Dezember 1854 schrieb Cowley an Clarendon:

'Der Kaiser sagte mir als ein Beweis seiner Zuneigung, dass er vollständig in Übereinstimmung mit Palmerstons Politik sei, dass er gern die Wiederherstellung Polens sähe, Finnland an Schweden abgegeben, die Krim der Türkei zurückerstattet, die Donauprovinzen an Österreich gegeben, und Italien unabhängig, etc.'²

Napoleons Ansichten waren in politischen und diplomatischen Kreisen kein Geheimnis, und Prinz Chimay, Ernsts II Pariser Korrespondent, schrieb am 18 Dezember, dass 'chaque jour grandit le danger de la revision de la carte européenne'.³ Diese Pläne waren jenen ähnlich,

¹ Benedetti an Thouvenel, 10 Dezember 1854: Thouvenel: *Pages de l'histoire du Second Empire*, 1854-6, Paris 1903, S. 26 f.

² Abschrift: Königliches Archiv zu Windsor: G 20, Nr. 147.

³ Ernst II: *Aus meinem Leben*, ii. S. 247.

welche Napoleon im März Ernst mitteilte, aber zur Zeit der früheren Unterredungen waren die vier Punkte nicht in dem Notenwechsel vom 8 August 1854 festgesetzt. Dass derartige Ansichten noch immer ernstlich erwogen wurden, zeigt die Bereitwilligkeit, jene Noten unbeachtet zu lassen, und konnte Napoleon gegenüber wenig Vertrauen erwecken. Hierin, sowie in vielem andern, hatte er die Österreicher oft enttäuscht: ihr Misstrauen gegen ihn war völlig gerechtfertigt. Der Gewinn, den Österreich aus dem Dezemberbündnis erhielt, war deshalb geringer, als Buol es sich gedacht hatte: Frankreich war in einem konservativen Sinne nicht entsprechend orientiert. Auf der anderen Seite war der Verlust Deutschlands für Österreich ungeheuer. 'Das Vertrauen zu Österreich', erklärte Bismarck, 'schon mächtig erschüttert, hat durch den 2. Dezember einen Stoss erhalten, und es gibt kaum einen gefährlichen und bundesbrüchenden Plan, dessen man das österreichische Kabinett demnächst nicht fähig hielt.'¹ Während Österreich unerträglich zögernd und konservativ schien in den Augen Englands und Frankreichs, wurde sein Verhalten in den Augen Preussens und des Bundes als hastig und fast revolutionär betrachtet. Am 8. Februar 1855, zu Frankfurt, entschied sich der Bund nur für 'Kriegsbereitschaft', nicht für Mobilmachung, was ein heftiger Schlag für Buols Politik war.

Das Bündnis der Westmächte mit Sardinien erregte Österreichs Verdacht: es sah dieses als Herd der Revolution an. Buol äusserte kein Missfallen darüber, schrieb jedoch an Hübner, dass es klar gestellt werden müsste, dass Sardinien kein Land gewinnen würde.

'Les rêves ambitieux', schrieb er, 'que le Piémont n'a cessé de caresser nous feraient attacher un prix particulier à ce qu'il ne lui fut laissé aucun doute que sa participation à la guerre ne pourrait en aucun cas servir de point de départ à des vues d'agrandissement territorial. Il devrait être aussi bien entendu que l'accession du Piémont au

¹ Brief von Bismarck: Heinrich Friedjung: *Der Krimkrieg und die österreichische Politik*, 2. Aufl., Stuttgart und Berlin 1911, S. 138 f.

traité de 10 Avril ne constituerait pour lui aucun titre de devenir partie contractante aux arrangemens d'un order européen qui seraient faits à la conclusion de la paix.¹

Man gab Buol darüber keine förmlichen Garantien: und Sardinien wurden anderseits keine Versprechungen gemacht. Vertreter Sardiniens fehlten auf der Konferenz, die im März 1855 in Wien stattfand. Die Westmächte hielten sich, sozusagen, Sardinien im Rückhalt. Bereits am 24 Dezember 1854 hatte Clarendon an Aberdeen geschrieben:

'Ich glaube, dass, wenn ein allgemeiner Frieden geschlossen ist, es zeitgemäss wäre, italienische Verhältnisse zu erörtern, und ich hoffe dass diese Gelegenheit wahrgenommen werden wird. Italien hat nichts mit dem jetzigen Krieg zu tun; ebensowenig hatte der Sklavenhandel mit dem Krieg gegen Napoleon etwas zu tun, doch wurde der Sklavenhandel reiflich erwogen und bedeutende Entscheidungen darüber auf dem Kongress zu Wien getroffen.'²

Derartige Darstellungen rechtfertigten Österreichs Misstrauen gegen die Westmächte, und es ist in der Tat auffällig, dass dies in demselben Monat geschrieben worden war, in dem sich Österreich mit jenen Mächten verbündete. Es zeigt auch, dass dies kein so fein erdachter Zug Cavours, wie gewöhnlich angenommen wird, war, die italienischen Probleme auf dem Kongress in Paris zur Erörterung zu bringen.

Die Bedeutung des Beitritts von Sardinien zu den Westmächten darf nicht überschätzt werden; man kann nicht behaupten, dass Österreich sich nur deshalb vom Kriege fernhielt, weil Sardinien sich dafür entschieden hatte. Buols Politik selbst blieb unverändert. Die einflussreiche prorussische Partei in Wien war jedoch der Meinung, dass die Westmächte den Pferdefuss gezeigt hatten: und der Vorfall mag wohl dazu beigetragen haben, den Einfluss Buols

¹ Privatbrief: Buol an Hübner, 4 Januar 1855: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien: Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 50.

² Aberdeen Briefwechsel, gedruckt 1885, aber nicht veröffentlicht, Bd. 1854-5, S. 298 (Das Exemplar im Manuscript Room, British Museum, ist benutzt worden).

zu schwächen, was sich denn auch bald bemerkbar machte. Irgendwelche Zeichen revolutionärer Tendenzen von seiten Englands und Frankreichs drängten Österreich tiefer in die Politik der Neutralität, welche es am Ende des Krieges ohne Freunde zurückliess.

Im Februar 1855 trat ein Wechsel in der englischen Regierung ein, und Palmerston wurde Prime Minister. Er hatte im März des vorhergehenden Jahres erklärt, dass sein 'beau idéal' die Wiederaufrichtung Polens usw. sei; und es war deshalb zu erwarten, dass eine Veränderung in der englischen Politik nach dieser Richtung hin eintreten würde. Dies war jedoch nicht der Fall. Palmerston als Prime Minister war durchaus nicht so ehrgeizig wie Palmerston als Minister des Innern. Dies lässt sich teilweise durch die Verantwortlichkeit seiner hohen Stellung, teilweise durch die veränderte Sachlage erklären. Der Krimkrieg war noch nicht erfolgreich zu nennen, und während des Winters befanden sich die Armeen der Verbündeten am Rande der Vernichtung. Es wurde als genügend erachtet, wenn die Verbündeten Sevastopol erobern würden, und die Pläne der früheren optimistischen Tage konnten durchaus nicht mehr als Möglichkeit hingestellt werden. Ja, Palmerston befand sich in einer solchen Lage, dass es ihm schwer fiel, den Friedensvorschlägen auf der Wiener Konferenz, welche am 15 März stattfand, zu widerstehen.

Ein ähnlicher Wandel trat in Napoleons Ansichten ein. Nachdem die Konferenzen ihren Anfang genommen hatten, sprach er wieder mit Cowley über Polen.

'Der Kaiser fragte ob die Sache Polens nicht wieder zur Sprache gebracht werden könnte. Er meinte damit nicht eine vollständige Unabhängigkeit Polens, sondern eine Wiederherstellung der Rechte, die ihm bei dem Wiener Vertrag zugesichert worden waren. Wenn dies nicht möglich wäre, sagte er, würde sich der ganze Gesichtskreis des Krieges ändern. Er würde an Popularität gewinnen und könnte mehr Einfluss auf die europäischen Interessen im allgemeinen haben.' 'Ich nehme an,' fuhr Cowley fort, 'dass kein

Zweifel darüber vorliegt, dass die Verbündeten vollständig gerechtfertigt wären, eine derartige Bedingung vorzubringen, wenn sie es für ratsam hielten.¹

Napoleon hatte seine Pläne im Laufe der Ereignisse stark gemässigt. Er dachte nicht mehr an ein unabhängiges Polen, sondern an ein wiederhergestelltes Kongress-Polen. Selbst dieser Plan ging zu weit, nicht allein für die englischen Staatsmänner, sondern auch für seine eigenen, hauptsächlich für Drouyn de Lhuys. Das Projekt wurde deshalb, wie bei anderen Gelegenheiten, ruhig beiseite gelegt. Das Wiederauftauchen dieses bekannten Symptoms zeigt deshalb, wie tief die Idee in Napoleon III eingewurzelt war, da er sie immer wieder aufrollte.

Auf der Wiener Konferenz erwiesen die Westmächte, wenn auch etwas widerwillig, Österreich eine gewisse Ehrerbietung, hofften sie doch noch immer, es in den Krieg ziehen zu können. Nach der Auflösung der Konferenz (4 Juni 1855) kam es jedoch sofort zu diplomatischen Missheiligkeiten zwischen Österreich und den Westmächten. England und Frankreich erkannten sofort Sardinien das Recht zu, bei künftigen Friedensverhandlungen anwesend zu sein.²

Dies war höchst beleidigend für Österreich, das in Sardinien einen hartnäckigen Friedensstörer sah. Walewski sprach auch mit Hübner über Italien, 'ihn daran zu erinnern, dass der Vertrag, welcher die französische Regierung in einem gewissen Grade verpflichtet hat, Hilfe zu leisten, um einen möglichen Ausbruch in diesem Lande zu verhindern, mit dem Dezember-Vertrag eng verbunden sei, und dass, falls Österreich verfehlen sollte, die abgeschlossenen Verpflichtungen des letzteren zu erfüllen, die ersteren Bedingungen null und nichtig werden würden.'³ Hier zeigte

¹ Abschrift: Cowley an Clarendon, 25 März 1855. Königliches Archiv zu Windsor: G 27, Nr. 49.

² Bericht Nr. 585: Clarendon an Cowley, 13 Juni 1855: Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1054.

³ Bericht Nr. 686: Cowley an Clarendon, 8 Juni 1855: Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1069.

Frankreich seine Zähne und drohte fast Österreich mit Revolution. Buol geriet dermassen in Schrecken, dass Bourqueney and Thouvenel mit Sicherheit annahmen, er würde sich Russland in die Arme werfen.¹ Aber gemässigtere Ratschläge wurden von den Staatsmännern der Verbündeten angenommen und die Entscheidung getroffen, alles zu versuchen, um Österreich in guter Stimmung zu erhalten. Wäre es gelungen, eine völlige Auflösung des Dezembervertrages zu verhindern, so hätten noch einige russische Armeekorps in Polen gehalten werden können, wozu die noch sehr unsichere Stellung der Verbündeten in der Krim herausforderte. Mittlerweile wurden die verdriesslichen Fragen über Italien und Polen beiseite geschoben und erst nach dem Fall von Sevastopol wieder zur Sprache gebracht.

Aus den hier angestellten Betrachtungen lassen sich verschiedene Schlussfolgerungen ziehen. Erstens seigt es sich, dass Ernsts Buch 'Aus meinem Leben' für die verschiedenen bedeutenden Unterhandlungen, in denen er eine Rolle spielte, als wenig befriedigende Autorität gelten muss. Obgleich dies Werk wertvoll bleiben wird, muss es doch mit Misstrauen betrachtet werden, so lange man keine Bestätigungen in anderen Quellen findet. Zweitens übten die ausgedehnteren Kriegspläne einflussreicher Persönlichkeiten in Frankreich und England, die den Österreichern durch Ernst II und andere bekannt wurden, einen bedeutenden Einfluss auf die Politik Österreichs aus. Obgleich das konservative Element in Frankreich und England die Oberhand behielt, bestand doch die Gefahr, dass sich der Krieg als ein Krieg um der 'Nationalitäten' willen ausbreiten könnte; der Gedanke an eine solche Möglichkeit war für Österreich unerträglich.

¹ Bericht Nr 866: Cowley an Clarendon, 3 Juli 1855: Public Record Office: F.O. 27/1071.

THE ECLIPSE OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL¹

The seventh chapter of Mr. Kingsley Martin's admirable work, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston*,² is headed: 'The completion of the picture (October 1853-January 1854).' But the picture is not complete. Palmerston's culminating triumph was when Sebastopol fell in September 1855: for he was then established as the unquestioned leader of the motley throng of Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals, which was about to become the Liberal party. The rise of his star naturally produced the setting of Lord John Russell's. In the 'forties, Lord John was Prime Minister and Palmerston Foreign Secretary; in the 'sixties, the positions were reversed, and Lord John was not Prime Minister again until Palmerston's death. The story of the rise of Palmerston and the decline of Lord John is long and complicated: for the statesmen were seldom rivals, and the problem cannot be solved by biographical study. The events of one short period—the first six months of 1855—none the less stand out as decisive in their careers.

Lord Aberdeen succeeded, on 28 December 1852, in forming a ministry of Peelites and Whigs, with one Radical minister—Molesworth. Palmerston was Home Secretary. Russell was Foreign Secretary, an office which he abandoned in the spring of 1853. It has long been known that Russell was unhappy as a member of this Government: and he did not hide from his colleagues his opinion that 'it is the worst Government I ever belonged to'.³ He had some reason to expect that Aberdeen would retire in his favour; and he was

¹ Reprinted from *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. v, No. 1, 1935.

² Published in 1924. Part of this work originally appeared in vol. i of *The Cambridge Historical Journal*.

³ Russell to Clarendon, 23 September 1854: MSS. *Clarendon Papers*. I am indebted to Professor Temperley for permission to make use of extracts from Clarendon's private papers.

disappointed in his hopes.¹ He bitterly resented the abandonment of his reform projects, necessitated by the greater problem of fighting a war with Russia. Hence, just when the Crimean War made a strong administration more than usually necessary for Britain, Russell was the most difficult of colleagues. During 1854, his threats of resignation were so frequent that they were almost comical. Prince Albert arranged a special file, headed in his own hand: 'Concerning the part which Lord John Russell took in breaking up Lord Aberdeen's Government, Nov. 1854-Feb^y 1855.'² As the Crimean winter dragged on, the public outcry grew louder and the Government was visibly shaken. On 22 January 1855, Colloredo (Austrian Minister in London) reported that 'les Whigs sont prêts à modifier le Ministère. Lord John Russell serait Premier Ministre; Lord Lansdowne Président, Lord Palmerston Guerre; Lord Clarendon resterait'.³ Either by chance, or through some special source, Colloredo was better informed even than Russell's own colleagues. On the same day Greville noted that Russell 'means now to stand by his colleagues, to accept his share of responsibility, and defend what has been done'.⁴ This was the general impression in political circles. Parliament met on 23 January. In the evening, Roebuck gave notice of a motion for a Committee 'to enquire into the condition of our army before Sebastopol, and into the conduct of those Departments of the Government whose duty it has been to administer to the wants of that army'. This motion was not unexpected: yet Russell, on reaching home on the night of

¹ John Earl Russell, *Recollections and Suggestions* (London 1875), Chapter vi. Also see correspondence on this subject (reprinted from *The Times*, 1 March 1875) in A. W. Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea*, 6th ed. vol. i. Appendix iv.

² *Royal Archives* [Muniment Room, Windsor Castle], A 84. I gratefully acknowledge the gracious permission of His Majesty the King to make use of unpublished material from the Royal Archives.

³ Cipher dispatch, Colloredo to Buol, 22 January 1855, No. 6 E, *Wiener Haus-Hof- und Staats-Archiv*, Pol. Arch. England, viii, Fasc. 42.

⁴ C. F. G. Greville, [*The Greville Memoirs: A Journal of the Reign of . . . Queen Victoria*, ed. Henry Reeve] (London, New Edn, 1896) vii, 231.

the 23rd, wrote to Aberdeen that the motion could not be resisted, and resigned his post. This decision was taken on an impulse which was afterwards regretted. Russell's behaviour at this time of crisis was generally execrated, and severely damaged his reputation. Shaftesbury called him 'a convicted criminal'.¹ Brougham was not quite so harsh—'unjustifiable as I admit his proceedings to have been, it was not from any vile intriguing plan of upsetting Aberdeen in order to take his place. He is incapable of that. . . .'² Yet there was also a feeling of relief: something was at last going to happen. 'We all admit that Lord John has rendered an immense public service,' was one comment, 'and we all cry out against him.'³ On the 25th, the Government decided to face Roebuck's motion. On the 29th the motion was carried by 305 votes to 148: and the great Coalition Government fell amidst the laughter of the House.

Aberdeen resigned on 30 January; and it was more than a week before a new Government was formed. Derby failed, to the everlasting disgust of Disraeli. Lansdowne declined the commission; and Russell, after a vain attempt, found that his late colleagues would not serve under him. His failure made Palmerston 'l'inévitable', as he called himself. Walewski, French ambassador in London, had instantly written to Prince Albert that 'un ministère, aujourd'hui, dans lequel Lord Palmerston et Lord Clarendon ne seraient pas compris, ferait défaut à la gravité des circonstances et ne répondrait que très imparfaitement aux nécessités de la situation'.⁴ This unorthodox assistance, against which Palmerston would have been the first to protest, did nothing

¹ Edwin Hodder, *Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* (London, 1888), p. 500.

² Brougham to Lady Westmorland, 3 February 1855: *The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland*, ed. by her daughter, Lady Rose Weigall (London, 1909), p. 251.

³ Elliot, Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, in Senior's Diary, 30 January 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories [of Many People]* (London, 3rd Edn, 1898), p. 158.

⁴ Walewski to Prince Albert, 30 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23, No. 83.

to help Palmerston's cause. Malmesbury was soon writing: 'I have positive proof that Walewski, throughout the late events, has been most active in the intrigue which placed and kept Lord Palmerston in office, both as against Lord John and Lord Derby.'¹ But the Queen could not long resist the chosen of her people. Sinking her personal feelings on the matter, she thought that 'if the *Peelites* and *Whigs* wd serve under L^d Palmerston, I sh^d not apprehend the consequences'.² Palmerston was able to announce on 6 February that a Government was formed. The new Cabinet omitted Aberdeen, Newcastle, and Russell: it was otherwise a reconstruction of the Cabinet that had forfeited the confidence of the House.

It is generally considered that Palmerston's Government was more warlike than its predecessor: and, in the long run, this view is correct. Aberdeen believed that if he had remained in power, peace would have been made at Vienna in 1855.³ The immediate result of the fall of Aberdeen's Government was, however, precisely the reverse of what might have been expected. For a brief but very important period—not more than a fortnight—the decisions of the new Cabinet were not more but less warlike. Aberdeen's principal Peelite colleagues entered Palmerston's Government only under pressure. Gladstone in particular was convinced that Palmerston would follow too warlike a policy.⁴ Aberdeen had long conversations with both Palmerston and Clarendon, and was so satisfied that he strongly urged his friends to take office.⁵ Guarantees were certainly given to him that the allies would not pitch their demands too high:

¹ 23 March 1855: Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an ex-Minister*.

² Memorandum of 1 February 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23, No. 81.

³ Lord Stanmore (then Sir Arthur Gordon), [*Life of Lord*] *Aberdeen* (London, 1893), pp. 284-5.

⁴ Palmerston to Gladstone, 16 February 1855: Guedalla, *The Palmerston Papers, being the Correspondence of Lord Palmerston with Mr Gladstone*, 1851-65 (London, 1928), p. 105.

⁵ e.g. Aberdeen to Sidney Herbert, 6 February 1855: Stanmore, *Aberdeen*, pp. 289-90.

and Palmerston promised 'que si Sébastopol n'est pas pris sa destruction ne saurait être demandée comme condition de la paix, mais que la limitation du nombre des vaisseaux russes dans la mer noire est indispensable'.¹ Britain was here abandoning the position, adopted in December 1854 (in concert with France, but without the knowledge of Austria²), that the destruction of Sebastopol should be a *sine qua non* of peace—an essential interpretation of the famous Third Point. Palmerston made no attempt to deny this new orientation of British policy.³ Aberdeen had been trying to establish this policy for some weeks without success;⁴ and it was now forced on Palmerston by the Peelites as their price for entering his Cabinet.

By this time France and Britain were, sorely against their will, committed to a peace negotiation at Vienna. This was a result of the treaty of 2 December 1854: by which the allies hoped to draw Austria into the war, and the Austrians hoped to draw the allies out of it. Clarendon and Aberdeen thought that Russell should be sent to Vienna as plenipotentiary, and they pressed their candidate on Palmerston, who agreed with somewhat bad grace. 'I have no objection,' he wrote, 'and if he would go to the H. of Lords on his return, with an olive-branch round his temples, that would be a good arrangement.'⁵ On 10 February, Clarendon proposed the mission to Russell,⁶ who accepted after a little hesitation.

¹ Lettre particulière, Colloredo to Buol, 24 February 1855: *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. England*, viii. Fasc. 44. And cf. *The Diaries of John Bright* (London, 1930), pp. 182 and 187.

² See below pp. 98-122.

³ Palmerston to his brother, 15 February 1855: Evelyn Ashley, [*The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston* (London, 1879), ii. 306.

⁴ e.g. Aberdeen to Clarendon, 21 January 1855: [*Selections from the Correspondence of [George, Earl of] Aberdeen, [Privately Printed, 1885]*, vol. 1854-5, p. 321.

⁵ Palmerston to Clarendon, 10 February 1855: Sir Herbert Maxwell, [*The Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of] Clarendon* (London, 1913), ii. 63.

⁶ Clarendon to the Queen, 10 February 1855: *Letters of Queen Victoria*, [ed. A. C. Benson and Viscount Esher], (2nd ed. 1908) iii. pp. 104-5.

In his letter of acceptance, he suggested that Prussia should if possible be admitted to the conferences, and that, 'if the first conference gives fair hopes of success, an armistice should be established'.¹ These suggestions, though not entertained by the Cabinet, show the novel direction in which Russell's ideas were tending. None was more warlike than he, when engaged in overturning a Cabinet: but peace—of which he was to have the glory—developed new attractions when he became a plenipotentiary. There can be no doubt of Russell's honesty, and that he honestly wanted peace. But his powers of self-deception were unusually developed. He may well have thought subconsciously that, if he could not be a Prime Minister waging a glorious war, at least he could be a plenipotentiary securing a glorious peace. Palmerston's considered judgment on Russell was very true. In 1852 he wrote that he 'acts perpetually from sudden and ill-considered impulse';² and again—when pointing out his unsuitability for the Vienna mission—he commented on 'his habit of acting upon sudden impulse'.³ Palmerston's first act as Prime Minister was therefore one of weakness. Holding such an opinion of Russell, he nevertheless agreed to appoint him to the task of ending the war with Russia.

The crisis in Britain was not ended when the Aberdeen Government was reconstituted under Palmerston. It still remained to deal with Roebuck's motion. Aberdeen and Newcastle—the chief offenders in the eyes of the public—had been sacrificed. Palmerston therefore hoped that Roebuck's motion would be quietly dropped. Unfortunately this question had not been thrashed out in the troubled days of the formation of the ministry. The Peelites, anxious to obtain guarantees that Palmerston would not follow a bellicose policy, omitted to obtain a formal guarantee that Roebuck's motion would be resisted. They understood, how-

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 11 February 1855: Spencer Walpole, [*Life of Lord John*] *Russell* (London, 1891), ii. 247-8.

² Palmerston to his brother, 30 April 1852: Ashley, *Palmerston*, ii. 233.

³ Palmerston to Clarendon, 10 February 1855: Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 63.

ever, that this was to be the case: and Palmerston vaguely thought that his popularity would enable him to secure the abandonment of the motion. The co-operation of the Peelites was therefore based on a misunderstanding.

On 16 February, Palmerston went down to the House, and declared that a Parliamentary commission was now superfluous: the new Cabinet would itself be the commission. But the new Cabinet was far too like the old one for this to be taken as anything more than a *bon mot*. Palmerston retired baffled—the House was intent on its commission. He met with no more success when, urged by the Cabinet, he returned to the charge. Graham, Gladstone and Herbert determined to resign when Palmerston declared that the commission could not be resisted further. On the eve of their resignation, Clarendon wrote that ‘bad and unpatriotic as I thought Lord John’s conduct, I think theirs worse—much worse’.¹ Their motive was purely constitutional: Roebuck’s commission, they argued, was an intolerable encroachment of the legislature on the executive. From a constitutional standpoint, they were perhaps right. But this was no time to risk breaking up another Government: and their resignation was universally condemned.

It was during the brief coalition period of Palmerston’s ministry that the final decision to negotiate at Vienna had been made, and Russell appointed as plenipotentiary. Russell set out on 26 February. No sooner had he left, however, than the Peelites retreated. The real breach of continuity with the Aberdeen ministry occurred on 22 February rather than on 6 February. In so far as Palmerston’s Government was more warlike than Aberdeen’s, the change began to operate from 22 February onwards—*after* Russell had had his conversations with the ministers, and had set out on his mission. There was no striking change of policy in England. But there was a subtle change of atmosphere: the spirit of compromise was gone. Palmerston had been

¹ Clarendon to Aberdeen, 21 February 1855: *Correspondence of Aberdeen*, vol. 1855-62, p. 48.

raised to the premiership on a tide of popular enthusiasm, which hailed him as the only man capable of waging the war. The war was his *raison d'être*, and he was determined to wage it. Matters would have been very different, had the Peelites been still in office: and, at one moment, peace was so near that their presence might have been decisive.

The retreat of the Peelites left three important places in the Cabinet vacant. For two posts, Palmerston secured more or less 'new men'; Cornwall Lewis succeeded Gladstone at the Exchequer, and Charles Wood succeeded Graham at the Admiralty. Russell, who was in Paris, hopefully delayed his departure when he heard of the new crisis.¹ His hopes did not deceive him: he was asked to join the Cabinet, and accepted the Colonial Office. He retained, however, his position as plenipotentiary at Vienna, and proceeded thither via Berlin. Opinions about Russell's acceptance were various. On the whole, his conduct was regarded as patriotic. Greville wrote that 'it is impossible not to give him credit for patriotic motives in making such a sacrifice of personal pride and vanity'; but he warily added that 'what his conduct may be if the Government lasts long enough to allow him to come home and take his place in it, may be considered doubtful'.² All opinions were not, however, so favourable: and Mrs. Grote exclaimed: 'A fellow who from the time he joined Lord Aberdeen was plotting to turn him out, with the shoes not two months old in which he scrambled over the ship's side after he had cut a hole in her bottom, to be thus rewarded for his intrigues and his falsehood!' ³ For the meantime, however, Russell was at Vienna, more or less removed from the praise or censure of his compatriots. But his new position as a member of the Cabinet—though he had never sat in it—was not without its influence on his behaviour as plenipotentiary.

¹ Cipher telegram, Cowley to Clarendon, 22 February 1855: [*Public Record Office*], Foreign Office, 27/1064.

² Greville, *Journal*, vii. 250.

³ M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, pp. 201-2.

Palmerston's opinion of Russell has already been noticed. Even the mild Aberdeen considered Russell 'sometimes rash or impracticable'.¹ Argyll writes that 'he had two dangerous qualities in a diplomat: he was very impressionable and he was very impulsive'.² Brunnow was more specific. 'Lord John Russell,' he declared, 'ne connaît que le vocabulaire parlementaire.'³ Russell was constitutionally a bad diplomat, and his experience in foreign affairs was at this time very limited. His new Cabinet office made him even less suitable for the post of plenipotentiary. He considered himself not so much a plenipotentiary under the orders of the Foreign Minister, as a triumphant peacemaker, who would return home and impose a compromise on the Cabinet of which he was a member. For him, there were now two sections of the Cabinet, one in London and one in Vienna—and he was determined that the Vienna portion (of which he was the sole member) should have its fair share in the forming of British policy. This picture is perhaps highly coloured: but some such process must have been working in Russell's mind—unconsciously, perhaps—to explain his remarkable conduct during the latter part of the negotiations. Russell was fully determined to obtain peace: and he was now prepared to go to greater lengths in order to get it. The retreat of the Peelites therefore had at once the effect of making the Cabinetless disposed to peace, and Russell more insistent on it.

Russell arrived in Vienna on 4 March 1855. He came away from his first interview 'much impressed by the sincerity of Count Buol in his endeavour to seek a solution of our present difficulties, which shall not only be peaceful but satisfactory'.⁴ He thought that Buol's schemes were 'not enough, but might be so strengthened as to make Russia

¹ Aberdeen to the Duke of Bedford, end of 1856: Kinglake, *Invasion of the Crimea* (6th ed.), i. 403.

² George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll (1823-1900), *Autobiography and Memoirs* (London, 1906), i. 549.

³ Brunnow to Fonton, 25 March (?6 April) 1855: Nesselrode, *Lettres et papiers [du chancelier Comte Charles de Nesselrode, 1760-1856]*, xi. 100.

⁴ Russell to Clarendon, 5 March 1855: No. 10, F.O. 7/462.

prefer our own humiliating proposal. However, think of it well, for the future state of Europe depends upon what we do now.’¹ It is interesting to see that Russell already regarded the allied proposal to limit the Black Sea fleet of Russia as ‘humiliating’. This is the first stage of Russell’s divergence from the views of the British Cabinet. It was not long before he diverged still further, and he is found writing: ‘The worst of it is, I cannot quite make up my own mind. I cannot bear the thought of carrying on the war till our armies have gained a great victory—but on the other hand, in summing up our securities we must see that they will bear scrutiny.’² The impressionable Russell was, in the atmosphere of Vienna, becoming steadily more pacific.

On 7 March 1855 the allied plenipotentiaries had a preliminary meeting. France and Britain proposed limitation as a solution of the Third Point: and Buol, the Austrian minister, finally agreed to bring this forward, as the simplest solution. But he warned the other plenipotentiaries ‘that if the Russian ministers positively decline to accede to such a condition, he should be ready to discuss other means of carrying the third point into effect’.³ Russell added, very pertinently, that ‘it will be for Her Majesty and Her Majesty’s Ministers to consider how far they will abandon or modify preconceived opinions to meet the views of Austria’.⁴ On this crucial point, Russell demanded instructions; but he did not succeed in obtaining anything really explicit or satisfactory. If it be admitted that Russell was not a very suitable negotiator, it must be added that he did not always receive adequate guidance or support from his Government. He was himself pleased with the result of the informal conference on 7 March, but confessed that little

¹ Copy in Prince Albert’s hand: Russell to Clarendon, 5 March 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 25, No. 79.

² Russell to Clarendon, 18 March 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

³ Russell’s Dispatch No. 12, F.O. 7/462.

⁴ *Ibid.* A long memorandum enclosed (undated, and endorsed ‘Paris’) makes it clear that the ‘preconceived opinions’ referred to are the Franco-British notes of 17-19 December 1854, which stipulated the destruction of Sebastopol, etc.

stress could be laid on Buol's promise to sponsor the limitation scheme, since 'we must not expect him to hold out stoutly for a proposition he does not much fancy, and which all the friends of Russia have taken in dudgeon, as an affront to the Emperor'.¹ Russell therefore remained peaceable, optimistic, and undecided.

The conferences, however, opened with rosier chances than had seemed possible. From every quarter news came that Russia desired peace: and the death of Czar Nicholas had given this news greater credibility. Austria, of course, desired it most earnestly. Cowley wrote that in France there was a universal cry for 'la paix à tout prix', the principal reason being apprehension at Napoleon's scheme of going to the Crimea.² Colloredo informed Buol that the desire for peace was growing daily in Britain—that if Russell should bring home peace, everyone would be relieved, though they hesitated to say so.³ Moreover, the *personnel* of the Vienna conferences had a pacific complexion. Gortschakov had the natural truculence of a man outnumbered among enemies: but in the critical days at the beginning of the year—when Russia's acceptance of the allied interpretation of the four points had hung in the balance—his weight had been thrown on the side of peace. Titov, his colleague, had been described as 'a Person moderately disposed, and anxiously desiring, though far from expecting, an early peace'.⁴ Buol, the president, was more desirous of peace than anyone: for the conferences were the fruit of his own policy. His colleague, Prokesch-Osten, reviewed the whole situation just before the conferences met, 'and finds peace as a result'.⁵ Westmorland, the second English plenipotentiary, was even more

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 7 March 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 18 March 1855: No. 330, F.O. 27/1065.

³ Colloredo to Buol, 15 March 1855: No. 33 F, *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. Eng-land*, viii. Fasc. 42.

⁴ Jerningham to Clarendon, 18 February 1855: No. 13, from Stuttgart, Württemberg, F.O. 82/80.

⁵ 12 March 1855: *Das Tagebuch des Polizeiministers Kempen von 1848 bis 1859*, ed. Josef Karl Mayr (Wien und Leipzig, 1931).

pacific than Russell. Bourqueney, who is portrayed by the Russians as the element of discord,¹ was a very able and pliant diplomat, who reflected chameleon-like the rapid changes of French policy. Two days after the opening of the conferences, Buol was able to write that 'Bourqueney se radouce de jour en jour'.² Prospects therefore seemed excellent when the conferences opened on 15 March 1855. The members of the conference were pacific—the feeling of the countries concerned seemed less warlike. The spiteful utterances of Palmerston and Clarendon amply showed their momentary discomfiture.

At the first five meetings progress was highly satisfactory. Between 15 and 26 March the first two points were expeditiously dealt with and an equitable settlement was reached. Moldavia, Wallachia, and Serbia were put under the protection of the contracting powers, and Russia thus abandoned her pretensions to special rights there—pretensions which Russell, when Foreign Minister, had deliberately declared to be 'prescribed by duty and sanctioned by Treaty'.³ The Danube was to be regulated henceforward by a European Commission, which would ensure its free navigation. It is customary to underestimate the concessions made by Russia on these two points. For the third point, it is true, were reserved the real struggle and the final breach: since on that point centred all the questions of *amour propre* about which negotiation is not really possible. A question of *amour propre* might have been raised on either of the first two points by the Russians: but it would have been bad policy to do so, since great Austrian interests were involved

¹ Brunnow wrote: 'Le petit Bourqueney est le plus malin de tous.' Nesselrode, *Lettres et papiers*, xi. 100. Cf. Baron Jomini, *Diplomatic Study of the Crimean War* (London, 1882), *passim*, for the conventional Russian account of Bourqueney's violence.

² Lettre particulière, Buol to Esterhazy, 17 March 1855: *W.S.A. Gesandtschaftsarchiv Russland*, x. Fasc. 178.

³ Russell to Seymour, 9 February 1853. [Cf. *Historical Revision* on 'The Seymour Conversations, 1853', in *History*, October, 1933, p. 244. Reprinted above pp. 1-14.]

in the Principalities and on the Danube. The struggle was therefore reserved for a point over which the Austrians would be less likely to support their allies of 2 December. Nevertheless, the first two points were in themselves a very grave check to Russia's policy in the Near East; and the allied belligerents would have had reason for satisfaction, if their national honour had not been so deeply committed to the capture of Sebastopol.

While the first two points were being satisfactorily settled at Vienna, all the undercurrents of diplomacy were occupied with the fateful third point. Russia steadfastly repudiated any limitation of her Black Sea fleet; and the instructions of the allied plenipotentiaries would admit of no other method. The next move was with Buol. He began by trying to cajole Britain and France. He declared that any of three schemes might be adequate: direct limitation, indirect limitation, and counterpoise. Russell's indecision was pitiable. He wrote that 'the alternatives suggested by Buol seem to me quite inadequate',¹ and that 'I should not mind any clamour in England if I could think such a peace as Buol suggests creditable or safe: but I cannot think it would be either'.² But at the same time he was writing at great length about the precarious military position of the allies,³ and strongly recommending the Austrian scheme, of which he did not approve. Buol, seeing signs of faltering both in the French and British attitude, took his next step by declaring that, though he was prepared to propose limitation in the conference, 'le rejet de cette condition par les plénipotentiaires russes ne constituera pas pour nous un cas de guerre'.⁴ The rejection of limitation by the Russians was certain, so this would mean, in effect, the end of the conferences, the rupture of the alliance of 2 December, and the continuation of the war without Austria. This prospect frightened the allied

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 18 March 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

² Russell to Clarendon, 28 March 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

³ Russell to Clarendon, 20 March 1855: No. 27, F.O. 7/462.

⁴ 24 March 1855: Hübner, *Neuf ans [de souvenirs d'un ambassadeur d'Autriche]* (Paris, 1904), i. 317.

plenipotentiaries, which was Buol's intention: but their instructions would not admit of concession. When Buol, therefore, produced a scheme which would postpone the crisis for some days, they were only too willing to agree. Buol proposed to give the initiative to Russia: and on 26 March, Gortschakov agreed to write immediately for instructions. The problem was not solved: but the crisis, at least, was postponed. The allies of 2 December were bankrupt of devices for pretending that they were in agreement, and had therefore given the lead to Russia, in the hope that their antagonist would pull them out of the scrape. Gortschakov was naturally puzzled, and spoke privately with Russell, asking what was expected. 'I mentioned the two notions—one of a limitation of Russian ships to a fixed number—the other of an Imperial declaration and stipulation that the number now existing (and floating) should not be increased.' The second, Gortschakov declared, was a possibility.¹ Russell was therefore recommending a scheme which (though originating with Drouyn de Lhuys and recommended by Buol) was not countenanced by his instructions, and was repugnant to the British Government. This was another step in the adoption by Russell of an independent line—laudable perhaps in the Cabinet minister, but reprehensible in the plenipotentiary. A lull now occurred in Vienna—the problem had to be faced in Paris and in London.

At the Quai d'Orsay, the panic caused by Napoleon III's wild project of going to the Crimea had made everyone desire peace. But, just at this date, Queen Victoria's suggestion that the French Imperial couple should visit her at Windsor made it evident that the Crimean voyage would at least have to be postponed. Napoleon would not yet give up his Crimean project: but he found it impossible to resist the blandishments of the Queen, so gratifying to a *parvenu*.²

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 26 March 1855: MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

² Walewski to Napoleon III, 13 March 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire [du Second Empire, 1854-6]* (Paris, 1903), pp. 56-7. Thouvenel to Benedetti, 24 March 1855: *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Drouyn de Lhuys, the French Foreign Minister, was delighted. It was no longer necessary to capitulate to Austria, in order to stop the Crimean journey and the Crimean campaign. The scheme that the Russian fleet should be limited in number to those actually floating was therefore temporarily abandoned. His fertile mind soon evolved another scheme, which is of special interest since it was finally adopted at the Congress of Paris: the plan of neutralisation. Drouyn's new idea was, roughly, that all vessels of war should be excluded from the Black Sea, including those of Russia and Turkey. Thus Russia should have no grievance, being placed on a precise equality with the other powers, and the purpose of the third point would be none the less attained.¹ This scheme was smiled upon in London: but it caused consternation in Vienna. Buol learnt of it on the morning of 26 March, just before the conference, and said he could not consider it. Russell wrote that it 'puts us out sadly', and 'I hope the question will not be revived'.² The neutralisation plan, though it provided the ultimate solution, was indeed at this date entirely impracticable.

Drouyn de Lhuys, who was filled with a burning conviction of the excellence of his scheme, understood in advance that it would meet with an unfavourable reception in Vienna. He therefore decided to go there himself, and to persuade the Austrians to accept it—to bring back either peace, or war with Austrian co-operation. The reaction of Cowley, British ambassador at Paris, to the news that Drouyn was going to Vienna is of special interest, since he exactly forecast events as they subsequently occurred there. '... I have no opinion of Drouyn's political integrity', he wrote privately to Clarendon. '... I am sure that at heart, altho' he was the greatest advocate in France for the war, he is for "la Paix à tout prix". The consequence will be that

¹ Copy: 'Memorandum on possibility of terminating the question of Russian supremacy in the Black Sea by shutting that sea to *all* Vessels of War: Comm'd by Ct Walewski, March 24, 1855.' F.O. 27/1093 A.

² Russell to Clarendon, 26 March 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

when he, Bourqueney, L^d John, Westmorland and Buol get together, they will concoct a peace of which I am sure both Countries will hereafter repent. L^d John will have the excuse of saying that the French Min^r for For: Affairs was satisfied and D. will give out that the man in whom the H. of Cs. had the greatest confidence was satisfied, and they will thus be a support to each other. I am at the same time bound to say that if I c^d put the slightest faith in anything D. says, I sh^d be perfectly satisfied with what he states to be the object of his journey. It is in the first place to get his neutrality scheme, if possible, accepted, and if he finds that impossible, a system of limitation which shall be really efficacious. But I feel certain that, once at Vienna, such is his desire for Peace, he will hold neither to the one nor the other.' ¹ The surprising turn of events at Vienna, which ultimately led to the resignation of both Drouyn and Russell, seems less surprising when the accuracy of this forecast is seen: it evidently lay in the circumstances, and even more in the policies and characters of the men involved. The forecast is also valuable as coming from the man who was to be largely responsible for the failure of all Drouyn's schemes. Cowley's first countermove was to persuade Drouyn to visit London before visiting Vienna. 'I think it an immense point gained,' wrote Cowley, '... but let me entreat you to put the resolutions you may jointly come to into writing.—There is no other safety.' ² It was therefore decided that Drouyn should, on 30 March 1855, discuss the problem of the third point with the most influential of the British ministers.

Meanwhile, the British Court and Cabinet had little good to say of the proceedings at Vienna. Especially distasteful was the news that Austria would not regard as a *casus belli* the rejection of limitation by Russia. 'The treacherous game of Austria and Russia is manifest and palpable,' wrote Palmerston to Russell, '... Austria evidently means to

¹ Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 27 March 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 27, No. 79.

² Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 28 March 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 27, No. 83.

throw us over on the third point; and if that is to happen, the sooner we are undeceived as to her intentions the better.' ¹ If there had been any deception, it was self-deception: for Austria had never promised to support limitation. On the other hand, France and Britain had deceived Austria by not telling her the full purport of the third point in December 1854. The British ministers were, however, in no mood for concession when Drouyn paid his visit on 30 March 1855.

On 30 March 1855 the meeting was held at Palmerston's house. Drouyn de Lhuys, Walewski, Palmerston, Clarendon, and Lansdowne were present. Following Cowley's advice, the decisions reached were committed to paper. Drouyn himself declared that 'il importait que les conclusions à formuler eussent un caractère officiel, et engageassent le gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique'.² Since the decisions of this meeting were binding on the British Government, they could hardly fail to be binding on the French Government. Three important documents were drawn up. The first defined the neutralisation project.³ Thus Drouyn had his own way with this favourite project of his fertile brain. The second document defined an alternative scheme, that of limitation.⁴ It was dominantly British in origin; and it stood no more chance of acceptance, either by Austria or by Russia, than did Drouyn's scheme of neutralisation. The third document laid down the course to be pursued at Vienna, and the use to be made of the two schemes outlined.⁵ Both schemes were to be explained to Austria, which would have to declare war on Russia if the latter refused the schemes, or scheme, when put forward

¹ 28 March 1855: Ashley, *Palmerston*, ii. 312.

² Drouyn de Lhuys to Napoleon III, 1 April 1855: Bernard d'Harcourt [*Les quatre ministères de M.*] *Drouyn de Lhuys* (Paris, 1882), p. 114.

³ Draft, in Walewski's handwriting, in F.O. 27/1093 A. Cf. Harcourt, *Drouyn de Lhuys*, pp. 118-19.

⁴ Draft, in Walewski's handwriting, in F.O. 27/1093 A. Cf. Harcourt, *Drouyn de Lhuys*, p. 122.

⁵ Draft, in Palmerston's handwriting, in F.O. 27/1093 A. Cf. Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, pp. 51-2.

à trois. If Austria declined to make rejection a *casus belli*, the neutralisation plan would be put forward by France and Britain alone, and negotiations broken off. Drouyn therefore set out for Vienna, rigidly bound down to two specific schemes, and to a mode of procedure. Though his subsequent behaviour was so extraordinary, he can hardly in this instance be accused of conscious duplicity. If his duplicity was conscious, it was very badly bungled: for he need not have bound himself so strictly on 30 March. It is far more likely that he was simply carried away by enthusiasm for his own project of neutralisation, and at London thought of nothing else. He greatly miscalculated the reception that the scheme would encounter at Vienna. He probably, moreover, overestimated his own influence on Buol, and Buol's influence on Franz Josef. When neutralisation was curtly rejected by Buol, Drouyn was rudely brought back to reality—and he slowly came back to his previous views, forgetting the engagements he had meanwhile contracted on 30 March. To interpret his conduct thus is at least more reasonable than to attribute the contradiction to a calculated duplicity, which would have been not only stupid but unnecessary. On 6 April 1855, Drouyn had appeared at Vienna, convinced that he and his neutralisation plan would bring back peace to Europe.

At Drouyn's first interview with Buol, it was definitely indicated that the neutralisation scheme would not be accepted by Austria. Austria would not make it a *casus belli*—she did not even regard it as just towards Russia.¹ On the 9th, Buol declared that there was no hope of Russia's accepting it; and, considering Russia's concessions on the other points, 'Austria was not prepared to go to war on account of the refusal of Russia to limit her naval force in the Black Sea'.² Limitation as well as neutralisation was thus

¹ Reports of Drouyn de Lhuys to Napoleon III. Harcourt, *Drouyn de Lhuys*, pp. 126-34.

² Russell to Clarendon, 10 April 1855: No. 66, F.O. 7/464. *Vide* also Clarendon to Aberdeen, 14 April 1855: *Correspondence of Aberdeen*, vol. 1855-62, p. 61.

excluded. At another meeting, on the 11th, Buol made his position even clearer—he would make neither neutralisation nor limitation a *casus belli*. It would, however, be a *casus belli* if Russia refused to guarantee the integrity of Turkey.¹ According to the allied decisions of 30 March 1855, only neutralisation or an effective limitation was to be accepted. If instructions had been properly obeyed, a rupture would now have occurred, as soon as the Russians refused to put forward a scheme of their own. Drouyn's desire for an Austrian alliance was, however, considerably stronger than his desire to conform to the engagements of 30 March. To Drouyn, 'le grand problème est de dompter la révolution sans le secours de la Russie, et de contenir la Russie sans le secours de la révolution'.² Drouyn's whole scheme of foreign policy was based on an alliance with Austria—an alliance which would curb his erratic Emperor's love for 'les idées napoléoniennes'.³ If a rupture with Austria occurred, all Drouyn's efforts of the last twelve months fell to the ground. So Drouyn de Lhuys—his instructions forgotten—continued to follow the *ignis fatuus* of an Austrian alliance that would be worth more than the paper it was written on.

Meanwhile, the problem of the third point was being considered at St. Petersburg, which had been asked by the allies to produce a scheme. A special committee, called to consider this important question, decided that Gortschakov should be authorised to make no proposition on the third point; but merely to discuss propositions 'qui seraient faites par les membres de la Conférence et qui ne porteraient point sur une limitation des forces navales de la Russie'.⁴ This decision was reached, not only because of the intrinsic difficulties of the problem, but because the Russians correctly saw, in the

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 12 April 1855: No. 70, F.O. 7/464.

² Harcourt, *Drouyn de Lhuys*, p. 133.

³ Cf. G. B. Henderson, 'Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der napoleonischen Ideen über Polen und Italien während des Krimkrieges' [*Zeitschrift für osteuropäische Geschichte*, Band viii. Heft 4]. Reprinted above pp 15-32.

⁴ Esterhazy to Buol, 13 April 1855: No. 21 B, *W.S.A.* Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 37.

abandonment of the initiative to St. Petersburg, that the allies could not agree among themselves.¹ At the tenth conference (17 April 1855) Gortschakov made the Russian decision known, and roundly declared 'that Russia would not consent to the strength of her navy being restricted to any fixed number, either by Treaty or in any other manner'.² This was therefore the point in the negotiations—envisaged at the London meeting of 30 March—at which the neutralisation plan should have been brought in, and a rupture achieved. This policy was not followed by the allied plenipotentiaries, who from now on were acting more or less in contradiction to their instructions. Instead of winding up the conferences, they declared their intention of concerting new schemes. Meanwhile Europe waited, and the cannon roared about Sebastopol.

The important negotiations were now the private conversations between Buol, Russell, and Drouyn de Lhuys. In these conversations, the allied plenipotentiaries entered into realms so far outside their instructions that nothing was mentioned of them in the official conferences. Even before the Russian refusal to submit a scheme, Buol had been at work. On 15 April he revealed his plan to the allied plenipotentiaries. Russell summarised the scheme as follows:

'(1) The closing of the Dardanelles with exceptions in case of menace.

(2) An European guarantee for the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

'(3) The principle of a limitation of the Russian naval forces in the Black Sea, or a counterpoise.' He commented briefly: 'I cannot advise acceptance.'³

Russell did not remain of this opinion long. On the 17th after the Russian refusal, Buol called the allies together and repeated his proposal of the 15th. Drouyn and Russell had

¹ Esterhazy to Buol, 10 April 1855: No. 21 D, *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. Russland*, x. Fasc. 37.

² Protocol No. X, Parliamentary Papers, *Eastern Papers*, xiii.

³ Cipher Telegram: Russell to Clarendon, 16 April 1855: F.O.7/464.

no alternative but to accept or to end the discussion: they accepted. Russell, in writing home, declared that 'in saying this I may appear to contradict my former opinions. But in fact I do not retract these opinions. The system of limitation I believe to be far better than that of counterpoise. But the question is between an imperfect security for Turkey and for Europe, and the continuance of the war'.¹ Russell is open to criticism as a bad diplomat, but he honestly desired peace, and was prepared to risk his career in order to get it. That there were petty and personal motives is undeniable—he dearly loved the idea that he was to be the man who ended the war. But, when everything is discounted, there remains a great residuum of self-sacrifice and honesty. His colleague, Drouyn, was in general neither self-sacrificing nor honest. But he now believed that it was necessary to end the war to prevent revolution, and he was prepared to dare much to achieve this end. The negotiations of this period reveal much duplicity on his part: but not on this occasion. In fact, he deserves every credit for honest motives.

Buol's idea was that Austria should address Russia an ultimatum, based on the idea of a counterpoise in the Black Sea.² The terms of the ultimatum might be sufficient—but only if there were a sanction for them, and more particularly for the first clause, 'the independence and integrity of Turkey'. This sanction—and indispensable corollary—was to be an alliance between Austria, France and Britain, for the purpose of holding back Russia in the coming years. This conception was the basis of Buol's whole policy—for such an alliance was almost as necessary for Austria as for Turkey. Franz Josef made no secret that 'he thought Russia would long bear ill will to Austria for the part she had taken, and he wished to be united in a Treaty with the Maritime

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 18 April 1855: No. 83, F.O. 7/464.

² For a draft of this project, see telegraphic cipher dispatch, Russell to Clarendon, 21 April 1855: F.O. 7/464. Two projects of ultimatum, in Drouyn's handwriting, are to be found in the *MSS. Clarendon Papers*, among letters from Russell. Cf. Harcourt, *Drouyn de Lhuys*, p. 142.

Powers, with a view to a permanent political system'.¹ The actual project of treaty was drawn up by Drouyn after a conversation with Russell. The 2nd Article said that the signatories (Austria, France, and Britain) would aid the Sultan in case of aggression. The 3rd Article said that 'le développement excessif des Forces Navales de la Russie dans l'Euxin' would be considered an act of aggression. A secret article added that the Russian fleet would be considered excessive if it attained its pre-war effective. These projects—the ultimatum and the treaty—were the terms round which the final struggle for peace at this period was made.

The behaviour of the allied plenipotentiaries was meanwhile causing consternation in Paris and in London. When Colloredo sent the new proposal to Clarendon, he was answered with some heat that it 'appears to me neither the proposal of an Ally or of a Friend', and that Austria 'tries our feelings towards her much too high when she proposes what is dishonourable to us'.² When Drouyn and Russell began to support the Austrian project, the home Governments hesitated a little. Cowley, however, did his best to scotch the project at once. 'If our negotiators at Vienna are not going daft,' he wrote to Clarendon, 'I do not see how their conduct is to be explained.' On the morning of 23 April he was closeted with Napoleon, who in his presence drafted a telegram requiring Drouyn to break off negotiations and come home.³ A similar frame of mind prevailed in Britain. The Queen wrote: 'How Lord John Russell and M. Drouyn can recommend such proposals to our acceptance is beyond her comprehension!' ⁴ This uproar in London and Paris did not move the allied plenipotentiaries. When Drouyn received Napoleon's telegram, rejecting the

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 23 April 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

² Clarendon to Colloredo, 18 April 1855: enclosed in Colloredo to Buol, 21 April 1855: No. 49 B, *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. England*, viii. Fasc. 42.

³ Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 23 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 19.

⁴ Prince Albert draft: the Queen to Clarendon, 25 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 23.

scheme, he at once declared that 'he is now more convinced than he was before of the value of this project'.¹ The allied Governments therefore decided to wait for the return of the plenipotentiaries before giving a final opinion of the scheme. But Palmerston condemned it as 'alike dangerous and dishonourable',² and Clarendon made it clear that the delay was purely one of form—'to prove to the world . . . that we have not closed the door upon any chance however small of peace'.³ It was not to a congenial atmosphere that Russell and Drouyn were returning.

During the absence of Drouyn at Vienna, British influence had become paramount at the Tuileries. The most important cause of this development was the visit of Napoleon and Eugénie to England.⁴ They landed on 16 April 1855, and on the 18th Napoleon was invested with the Order of the Garter. Everywhere they were welcomed by cheering crowds; and everywhere they found a more warlike feeling than that to which they had become accustomed at home. From this great occasion, therefore, Napoleon came back more than ever convinced of the value of the British alliance, and of the warlike policy he would have to pursue in order to retain it. The first-fruit of the visit was that Napoleon at last gave up his project of going to the Crimea: and there was a general feeling of relief both in France and Britain. Not long afterwards, Persigny told Cowley that he had been in favour of peace only because of Napoleon's project of going to the Crimea, and now he was once more in favour of war.⁵ Many others followed this line of reasoning, and Napoleon's *entourage* was by the end of April becoming less

¹ Westmorland to Russell, 24 April 1855: Walpole, *Russell*, ii. 266.

² Palmerston to the Queen, 26 April 1855: *Letters of Queen Victoria*, iii. 120.

³ Clarendon to the Queen, 26 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 32. Clarendon seems to have been convinced that it was best to wait for Lord John by a letter of 26 April from Lord Harrowby: *vide MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

⁴ Details of this visit are to be found in Theodore Martin, [*Life of the*] *Prince Consort* (London, 1875-80), iii. Chapter lxii.

⁵ Cowley to Clarendon, 11 May 1855: No. 540, F.O. 27/1067.

pacific. Napoleon was still, however, so intent on strengthening the alliance with Austria that these warlike influences only made his dilemma worse. He was full of hesitation as Drouyn's telegrams, supporting the Austrian scheme, came pouring in.¹ His wavering mind tended to come down on the side of rejection. On the 30th, Hübner (Austrian minister at Paris) telegraphed that 'S.M. est décidée à ne point accepter nos dernières propositions, mais Elle attendra, avant de se prononcer, Mr Drouyn de Lhuys, qui doit arriver aujourd'hui. S.M. avait l'air très-affligé. Lord Cowley s'énonce dans le même sens'.²

British pressure had thus proved temporarily successful at Paris: and it was to prove so again, after a further week of conflict. 'L'influence anglaise,' wrote Hübner, 'a certes contribué à cette résolution de ne point accepter nos propositions.'³ The strength of the British influence over Napoleon at this date is a matter of first importance. Hübner commented on it frequently in his diary. On 27 April he noted that 'ici se fait valoir l'influence (pas bonne dans ces affaires) de Lord Cowley sur l'Empereur'. On the 29th, 'l'enivrement produit par le voyage d'Angleterre continue. Cowley l'exploite avec succès'. On the 30th, 'l'Empereur ne voit plus que par les yeux de Lord Cowley'.⁴ It is not possible to go so far as Greville, who later wrote that 'throughout the Eastern question Cowley has acted the part of Foreign Minister to the Emperor almost as much as that of Ambassador'.⁵ But, if limited to the three weeks after Napoleon's return from England, this statement would not be far from the truth.

Russell returned to London late on the 29th, and Drouyn

¹ Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 24 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 29; cf. *Ibid.*, 25 April 1855, G. 29, No. 42.

² Cipher telegraphic dispatch, 11.50 a.m.: Hübner to Buol, 30 April 1855: *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. Frankreich*, ix. Fasc. 48.

³ Lettre particulière: Hübner to Buol, 30 April 1855: *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. Frankreich*, ix. Fasc. 50.

⁴ Hübner, *Neufans*, pp. 323-5.

⁵ 23 December 1855: Greville, *Journal*, vii. 313.

to Paris on the 30th. Their arrival quickly changed the complexion of affairs once more. On 1 May 1855, Drouyn persuaded Napoleon to adopt his scheme, with some modifications, and at once wrote to Walewski and Russell, pressing them urgently to secure the consent of the British Government. Meanwhile, Russell had on his return at once called on Clarendon. Clarendon declared that the *status quo ante bellum* for the Russian fleet was inadmissible, and Russell agreed that it 'would have a very awkward appearance'. Nevertheless, Russell 'ended by saying that if the Gov^t refused to make such a peace as was now within their reach, they w^d commit the greatest blunder that any Gov^t ever committed':¹ but he did not press his views unduly on the Cabinet. On 2 May, the modified proposal of Napoleon became known, and was debated by the astonished Cabinet. No decision was arrived at, and it was agreed that reference should be made to Paris for further details.² It is clear that the Cabinet did not discuss the intrinsic merits of the project, so much as the awkward effects of its acceptance by Napoleon. Lansdowne indeed later declared that 'the deliberations of the Cabinet with respect to the Austrian Propositions were not deliberations as to the desirableness of their being accepted or rejected, but as to the conduct which we ought to pursue in the event of their being accepted by Louis Napoleon'.³ But evidently, at this critical moment, the resolution of the British Government was weakening. First, the Court—which was usually as warlike as Palmerston—threw its weight on the side of not rejecting the modified proposal. Baron Stockmar had been consulted as soon as Russell returned, and before the attitude of the French was known. He replied that 'he agrees so far with the opinion entertained now by L^d John that there are five chances

¹ Clarendon to the Queen, 30 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 67.

² Clarendon to the Queen, 2 May 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 85.

³ Senior's Journal, 15 July 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, p. 225. Cf. undated note by Charles Wood (probably 6 or 7 May 1855) in MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

against one, that if we don't conclude Peace *now* on the Austrian Proposals, *modified and mended in the Interest of England and France*, we may be forced at a *later Period* to come to Peace on more disadvantageous terms'.¹ On 3 May, Prince Albert propounded his views in a long memorandum written for the use of the Cabinet. His advice was not in favour of a mere acceptance of the project: but it envisaged the possibility of abandoning limitation, and was certainly in favour of parleying.² Already on 2 May Colloredo had been able to telegraph to Buol that 'les dispositions sont devenues plus favorables à l'acceptation de nos propositions avec . . . quelques modifications'³—and, as each hour passed, they looked more favourable still.

Meanwhile, some members of the Cabinet were of opinion that the project might be accepted—Cornewall Lewis, for example, 'thought that our acceptance of these terms offered a reasonable ground of peace'.⁴ There was always a fear, too, that Russell would resign and overthrow the ministry. Clarendon, in an agony of doubt, sent the project to Aberdeen: 'The recommendation of the Emperor and the badness of our military prospects give it a claim to consideration, and I shall be really obliged if you will let me know your opinion of it.' Aberdeen replied 'that the great policy of keeping England, France, and Austria united will fully justify you in agreeing to the proposal'. He added that 'I think it right you should know that the friends, for whom I can venture to speak, would give their best support to the

¹ Stockmar to the Queen, 30 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 68. Buol tried to get Albert's brother Ernest to use his influence with the Court: Ernest II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, *Memoirs*, trans. by Percy Andreae (London, 1888-90), iii. 167-9.

² *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 90. Partly printed in Theodore Martin, *Prince Consort*, iii. 270-3: but the comment on it is erroneous. Russell thought the Prince's Memorandum excellent: Russell to Clarendon, 4 May 1855: MSS. Clarendon Papers.

³ Cipher telegraphic dispatch: Colloredo to Buol, 2 May 1855, 5.55 a.m.: *W.S.A. Pol. Arch. England*, viii. Fasc. 42.

⁴ Lewis, in Senior's Journal, 8 July 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, p. 215.

principle of this settlement; while the rejection of peace, upon such conditions, would be subjected to very sharp criticism'.¹ This was very unlike the gentle tone usually adopted by Aberdeen: it was a veiled threat—a threat which Gladstone in particular later made good. It is also instructive to notice the change that came over Palmerston's tone. On 26 April, he had bluntly declared to Clarendon that 'you may positively and distinctly say that Her Majesty's *present* Government cannot and will not accept Drouyn's proposals. If it is to be adopted, it must be by a government under another head.'² On 3 May, there was no more of this bluster. In writing to Clarendon, he regarded the acceptance of the project as a possibility: and, though he proceeded to argue against it, he did so with a subdued air, ending 'I am just going to Walewski to talk the Matter over with him, but will take Care not to express any formed opinion.'³ On 3 May, therefore, everything was still undecided in London: but the current was running very strongly against the rejection of the project.

While the British Cabinet was hesitating, no effort was spared by Drouyn and Buol. But they were fatally hampered by the sullen passiveness of Napoleon. He had accepted the project: but he seemed unwilling to do more. Hübner noted that 'l'Empereur, il est vrai, a accepté l'amendement, mais de mauvaise grâce et à son corps défendant'.⁴ Some days later, summarising his efforts, Drouyn wrote that 'trois fois, le Comte Walewski m'écrivit, par le télégraphe, que si l'empereur manifestait d'une manière formelle la persistance de son désir, le cabinet britannique, quoique à regret, y donnerait son assentiment. . . . Deux fois je suppliai l'empereur, par écrit, de soutenir la déclaration que, d'après son ordre, j'avais envoyée à Londres. L'empereur ne l'a pas fait, et m'a laissé ignorer le changement qui s'accomplissait dans

¹ Clarendon to Aberdeen, 2 May 1855; and Aberdeen to Clarendon, 3 May 1855: *Correspondence of Aberdeen*, vol. 1855-62, pp. 64-6.

² Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 81.

³ MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

⁴ 4 May 1855: Hübner, *Neufans*, i. 325.

sa volonté.'¹ For three days Napoleon remained in this state of gloomy hesitation. If Drouyn could have wheedled one approving telegram from him, the result might have been peace. The crisis occurred on 4 May 1855, when the Emperor finally made up his mind.

It has been seen how Napoleon had been, since his visit to England, relying more and more on the advice of Cowley. On the morning of 4 May he sent for Cowley, and asked him for his opinion of the modified Austrian scheme.² Cowley declared that he could not speak in an official capacity: but that, for himself, he 'did not see how the modification made the Austrian plan more palatable'. Napoleon thereupon expounded his views, and Cowley discovered that he had a mistaken idea of the project: he thought 'that Russia was to be required to consent to a limitation of her fleet to the number now actually afloat'. It seems incredible that Napoleon should have been so obtuse, and Drouyn de Lhuys vigorously denied that there had been any *malentendu* on the subject: but, though the extent of the delusion is not quite clear, it appears certain that Napoleon's hazy mind had not obtained a full grip of the project when he assented to it. Napoleon was much vexed, and said that he must see Drouyn. Cowley thereupon boldly asked if he might be present at the interview—since 'you know that I have no faith in my friend Drouyn', as he confided to Clarendon. Napoleon consented, and asked Cowley to call on him at two o'clock that afternoon.

¹ Drouyn de Lhuys to Napoleon, 7 May 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, p. 81.

² There are many sources for the so-called 'Cowley Interview'. His private letter to Clarendon, written on the same day, is followed here except where other sources are quoted: *vide* Copy, in *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 104. Other sources are: Cowley to Clarendon, 7 May 1855: No. 515, F.O. 27/1067. Drouyn de Lhuys to Napoleon, 7 May 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, pp. 81-2. Hübner to Buol, 9 May 1855: No. 45, Litt.B.: *W.S.A.* Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 48. Hübner, *Neuf ans*, i. 326-8. M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, pp. 217-20. A. H. Johnson, *The Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve*, 1836-65 (London, 1924), p. 235. Vitzthum von Eckstaedt, *St. Petersburg and London*, 1852-64 (London, 1887), i. 173.

When Cowley returned to the Tuileries at two o'clock, he found that Drouyn had been with Napoleon for an hour. 'When I went in,' wrote Cowley, 'the tables had again become turned, and there was the Emperor again convinced that limitation was insisted on. By great good luck the Emperor had sent for Vaillant, and we soon dusted his Colleague's back most handsomely. Drouyn got out of Temper, and was regularly crestfallen. Vaillant declared that anything more dishonourable to the Army than the terms proposed by Austria could not well be imagined. He ridiculed the idea of the frigates in the Black Sea being the result of all our enormous efforts. In short he was game to the backbone.' Vaillant was the War Minister, whom Napoleon had long been used to consult on military matters.¹ Three years before, Hübner had written of Napoleon: 'Son pouvoir se fonde sur l'armée. *Avec elle, par elle, pour elle, doit être désormais sa devise.*'² This was an exaggeration, but there was a great truth at its core. Vaillant, at this critical moment, assured Napoleon that the army would not be satisfied with the peace that Drouyn was pressing on him. So at last Napoleon made up his mind—against the Austrian project. The issue in Paris was decided: and in London it was now a foregone conclusion. On 6 May 1855, Palmerston wrote to Clarendon: 'I suppose that the Emperor has unreservedly adopted Vaillant's view of the Matter as regards the Military Honor of France.'³ From the beginning, therefore, Vaillant was considered to have played a decisive part.

An analysis of the events of 3 and 4 May, from strictly contemporary documents, makes it clear that the rejection of the Austrian project was not due to pressure on Napoleon by the British Cabinet, or by individual Cabinet ministers. On 3 May, Palmerston wrote to Clarendon in terms that showed that acceptance was still possible: and, on the 4th,

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, 2 February 1854: F. A. Wellesley, *The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire* (London, 1928), p. 41.

² 8 January 1852: Hübner, *Neufans*, i. 51.

³ MSS. Clarendon Papers.

Cowley wrote that his advice to Napoleon was of a purely personal character. Hübner shrewdly noted 'd'abord que le changement opéré dans l'esprit de l'Empereur est dû à l'influence personnelle de Lord Cowley, et en second lieu que cette influence personnelle a été exercée, sinon en dehors de la volonté du Cabinet Anglais, du moins dans une proportion qui dépasse les vues et les desseins de ce dernier'.¹ Though the truth is clear enough, the actual course of events was very liable to misconstruction. Before long, Greville was writing that Cowley 'stated the views and opinions of the English Government',² and Lord Holland went to the fantastic length of declaring that the 'rejection was obtained through a threat by Palmerston to resign if Louis Napoleon persisted'.³ Russell discovered a grievance some months later, 'and one of the things he complains of is that the Cabinet was never informed of what had passed, and its members were allowed to suppose, like the public, that the Emperor's rejection had been spontaneous, instead of having been suggested and urged upon him by us'.⁴ The answer to Mr. Simpson's question: 'Who tricked Lord John?'⁵ therefore appears to be: 'Lord John tricked himself.' In one sense, of course, Palmerston may be held responsible; as Lewis put it, the proposals 'were substantially rejected by Palmerston—that is, . . . if he had chosen, they would have been accepted'.⁶ But, in this sense, any of those who disliked the project may be held responsible: the balance between peace and war being so delicately poised that any one of a dozen

¹ Hübner to Buol, 9 May 1855: No. 45, Litt.B., *W.S.A.* Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 48.

² Greville to Reeve, June 1855: Johnson, *Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve*, p. 235. Hübner at first said the same, though he later learnt the truth: *vide* telegram, Hübner to Buol, 5 May 1855: No. 28, 8.08 a.m.: *W.S.A.* Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 48.

³ Senior's Journal, 8 July 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, p. 217.

⁴ 7 September 1855: Greville, *Journal*, vii, 290.

⁵ F. A. Simpson, *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France* (London, 2nd Ed. 1930), p. 307.

⁶ Senior's Journal, 22 July 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, p. 230.

men might have given a decisive push in one or the other direction. Cowley was undoubtedly given courage and firmity of purpose by the knowledge that his 'unofficial' words expressed the private opinions of Palmerston and Clarendon. The most probable guess of the motive of Napoleon's rejection is perhaps that of Senior: 'Perhaps he knew, unofficially, that the English Cabinet, or at least the great majority of the Cabinet, disapproved the propositions; and, foreseeing that he would probably have to refuse them, thought it advisable to be the first to do so.'¹ These considerations, and the words of Vaillant, destroyed Drouyn's ascendancy over Napoleon—'we have beat Drouyn to pieces', wrote Cowley joyously. The tidings were at once forwarded to London.² While these stirring events had been happening at the Tuileries, Downing Street remained undecided;³ but Napoleon maintained his rejection when he learnt that the Cabinet of 4 May had left the question open.⁴ The Cabinet, relieved of the necessity of making up its own mind, was thankful. Palmerston and Clarendon were unashamedly jubilant, and Clarendon wired to Cowley: 'All is right, and we agree with the Emperor.'⁵

But all was not right with Drouyn de Lhuys: he had been so very near a triumph that he could not stomach a defeat. On 1 May he had persuaded Napoleon to his point of view: and if at any time during the next three days that view had been supported by Napoleon at London, its success appeared certain. That support never came. 'Ainsi, pendant trois jours,' wrote Drouyn to Napoleon bitterly, 'ma parole a été infirmée par le silence de l'empereur; pour être défini-

¹ Senior's Journal, 17 July 1855: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories*, p. 228.

² Cipher telegram: Cowley to Clarendon, 4 May 1855, 5.30 p.m.: F.O. 27/1067.

³ Clarendon to the Queen, 4 May 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 95.

⁴ Cipher telegram: Cowley to Clarendon, 5 May 1855, 2.50 p.m.: F.O. 27/1067 *vide* also Clarendon to the Queen, 5 May 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29, No. 102.

⁵ Cipher telegram: Clarendon to Cowley, 5 May 1855: F.O. 27/1053.

tivement contredite devant un étranger.' ¹ Drouyn felt himself humiliated, and resigned. Napoleon asked Drouyn to reconsider this decision: but he was adamant, and even refused a proffered interview. This resignation is of the utmost importance, not in its immediate but in its ultimate results. Napoleon tried to pursue Drouyn's policy, and—aided by victories in the Crimea—was able to gain all that Drouyn had desired, even his favourite neutralisation scheme. But the policy of Drouyn could not be carried on successfully without the master-hand: the tripartite treaty of 1856 proved a dead letter, and France and Austria drifted into the war of 1859. If Drouyn had remained at the helm, events might have turned out very differently.

Meanwhile the problems facing the British Cabinet were not ended by Napoleon's rejection of the Austrian project. Drouyn and Russell had acted in very close co-operation at Vienna: and, when Drouyn resigned, Russell at once wrote to Clarendon that he could hardly continue in office.² Earlier in the day (6 May) Palmerston had written that he feared Drouyn's resignation 'might possibly tend to set John Russell's mind afloat again';³ and, when he learnt that his misgivings were justified, there was an explosion of wrath. 'All one can say,' he wrote, 'is that I should think it was the first instance in which a plenipotentiary, having undertaken a negotiation on instructions founded on principles of which he approved, turned round upon his government, and, after the plan he had been instructed to press had failed, should turn round upon his employers and endeavour to force upon them a plan totally different from that which he had undertaken to propose.'⁴ Russell suggested that the British Cabinet should adopt the Austrian scheme, in spite of Napoleon's refusal, and should force it on

¹ Drouyn de Lhuys to Napoleon, 7 May 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, p. 82.

² Russell to Clarendon, 6 May 1855: Walpole, *Russell*, ii. 268.

³ Palmerston to Clarendon, 6 May 1855: MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

⁴ Palmerston to Clarendon, 6 May 1855: Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 82.

the French. But Palmerston declared that this was impossible, and that Russell could hardly make his resignation depend upon this. His Cabinet was, however, faced with disintegration: so on the 7th he wrote that 'the thing to aim at to-day seems to me to be to persuade John Russell not to take any hasty Decision, and not to commit himself by announcing to others the Intentions which he has at present formed'.¹ Clarendon thereupon wrote to Russell '*earnestly to entreat*' him not to commit himself.² Russell showed signs of weakening, and wrote that 'if Drouyn has got into any personal quarrel I have nothing to do with it, but if he has resigned because his advice is not taken, the case is different'. He added that 'it is entirely a point of honour, for I feel that with the strong opinion now expressed by the Emperor Napoleon we could not possibly accept the Austrian propositions'.³ Since it was a point of honour, and not a matter of principle, Russell was persuaded to remain in the Cabinet. But events proved that his political instinct was right when he contemplated resignation. Two months later he was driven from office, in very ignominious circumstances, on this very question.

Palmerston's ministry on the whole strengthened its hold on public opinion by the attitude taken up at the conferences. Sidney Herbert declared with justice that 'they would have been hooted out of office' if they had agreed to terms acceptable to Russia.⁴ The Protectionist party, however, maintained its very factious opposition. On 19 May, Disraeli's organ, *The Press*, expressed the sensible view that 'to make European peace or war depend on the point whether Russia is to maintain a few ships more or less in the Black Sea is a conception more worthy of the statesmen of Laputa than of practical England. The negotiation should never have been opened on the basis adopted, or should never have been

¹ Palmerston to Clarendon, 7 May 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

² Clarendon to Russell, 7 May 1855: Walpole, *Russell*, ii. 269.

³ Russell to Clarendon, 7 May 1855: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

⁴ Herbert to Aberdeen, 17 May 1855: Lord Stanmore, *Sidney Herbert: A Memoir* (London, 1906), i. 426.

broken off on so trivial a difference.’¹ Disraeli’s attacks, which were not always so reasonable as this, were both able and persistent, and seriously hampered the Government in the House. Moreover, attacks came not only from the ultra-war party but from the peace party, which had been rendered more formidable by the accession of the Peelites. Many were of opinion that peace should have been made at Vienna—that Austria had not broken her engagements of 2 December—and that the whole affair had been hopelessly bungled. The Peelites attacked Palmerston so briskly that Prince Albert wrote to Aberdeen in protest²—a striking example of the loyalty with which the Court was supporting its old adversary. All the elements antagonistic to the ministry had an excellent opportunity when Buol, towards the end of June, published certain ‘revelations’ about the Vienna Conferences. Buol had been much disappointed by what he considered Russell’s quiescence. ‘Vos rapports ne me parlent pas de Ld John Russell’, he had complained to Colloredo.³ Russell, having been persuaded to remain in the Cabinet, made warlike speeches little favourable to Austria: and Buol retaliated effectively by publishing the fact that Russell and Drouyn had agreed to his final proposal. When Russell had learnt of Napoleon’s rejection of the scheme, he was sincerely of the opinion that a vigorous prosecution of the war was the only course to pursue. Buol’s ‘revelations’, however, brought down a storm upon his head. Why had he spoken with one voice in London and another in Vienna? Was he for peace or for war? Why had he remained in the Cabinet, and why had the Cabinet suffered him to remain? The storm threatened to engulf the Government and Russell offered to resign. Palmerston and his Cabinet colleagues at first refused to abandon Russell, but they were forced to do

¹ W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli* (London, 1929), i. 1406.

² Copy: Prince Albert to Aberdeen, 3 June 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 32, No. 21.

³ Lettre particulière: Buol to Colloredo, 20 May 1855: *W.S.A. Pol. Arch.* England, viii. Fasc. 44.

so owing to the attitude of the members of the Government not in the Cabinet. Russell resigned on 13 July 1855. The first French plenipotentiary had gone already—now the first English plenipotentiary followed him into retirement. The Conferences of Vienna had been deadly to the reputations of the potential peacemakers.

In the eyes of the public, Lord John Russell was hopelessly compromised. In the words of a contemporary ballad-monger:

I went like a fairy plenipotentiary
To the town of Vienna, to settle the war,
But they'll not me believe then, they vow I've deceived them,
And call me a friend of the great Russian Czar.¹

The accusation that he was a 'friend of the great Russian Czar' was fatal to his political influence. Meanwhile Palmerston went on from strength to strength, and in 1856 he brought the war with Russia to a successful conclusion. When a general election was held in 1857, on the subject of Sir John Bowring's iniquitous proceedings in China, Palmerston had a triumph at the polls: while Russell had his work cut out to avoid being ousted from his seat in the City. Pride brought its fall, over the question of the Conspiracy to Murder Bill: and Palmerston and Russell—now both out of office—were in a somewhat more equal position. Yet, when the Queen had to make the choice, on 12 June 1859, it was Palmerston that she sent for. Russell became Foreign Secretary, and the old positions of the two leaders were at length definitively reversed.

¹ [John Ormsby], 'Street Ballads of the War' (*Chambers's Journal*, 17 May 1856). Apparently an adaptation of a ballad by John Morgan, printed in Charles Hindley, *Curiosities of Street Literature* (London, 1871).

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN, 1854-1856¹

Between the Spanish Marriage Question of 1846 and the *coup d'état* of 1851 there was an unremitting guerilla warfare between Palmerston and the Crown. The details of this conflict are sufficiently well known to need no further elaboration.² The result was, in the long run, peculiarly satisfying; for both sides were victorious. Palmerston became Prime Minister in 1855, and held the reins of power almost uninterruptedly until his death. On the other hand, the Crown successfully carried the point that had been the cause of trouble with Palmerston in his unregenerate days. It was established that the Queen had the right to examine all drafts of dispatches before they were sent away, and to suggest modifications for the consideration of her ministers. The struggle to establish this right is well known; but what of the fruits of victory? How did the Queen's examination of dispatches work in practice, and what degree of influence was exercised by the Crown on British foreign policy? So great was the heat and dust of the conflict with Palmerston that these questions have seldom been asked. The principle once conceded, the practice has been almost ignored.

In an endeavour to estimate the influence of the Crown the Crimean War period has been chosen. These years have been selected both because they are important in themselves, and because historical material for the point under discussion is exuberantly plentiful.³ Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

¹ Reprinted from "The Influence of the Crown": *Juridical Review*, December 1936.

² For an excellent recent account see Herbert C. F. Bell, *Lord Palmerston* (2 vols., 1936).

³ Sir Theodore Martin wrote, in his introduction to the third volume of the *Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*: "The Prince's papers on the Oriental Question—from 1853 to 1857—extend to no fewer than fifty folio

were a perfect married couple, and worked in complete harmony. So far as matters of policy went, the Prince was the dominant partner; and to discuss the influence of the Crown is therefore to discuss the influence of the Prince. He drafted most of the Queen's letters. He generally wrote or dictated the necessary memoranda. There is no evidence on the subject, but it is fairly clear that the Prince read the draft-dispatches from the Foreign Office, and pointed out to the Queen passages that he considered dubious. He laboured unremittingly; and he preserved the documents which came into his hands in a way that must earn him the gratitude of posterity. The influence of the Prince in military matters—particularly the details of army organisation—is clearly shown in Sir Theodore Martin's monumental *Life*, and it is superfluous to give further details of this side of his activities. But the influence of the Crown on political and diplomatic questions is more obscure.

When the year 1854 opened, Turkey and Russia had already been at war for two months. France and Britain were on the point of going to Turkey's assistance; but their motives for so doing were very different. Napoleon III desired to raise the prestige of his dynasty, and to break up the long-standing alliance of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, which had hemmed France in for forty years. Britain, for her part, wanted to protect her special interests in the volumes; and, while they shew the importance which he attached to that question, they contain so rich a profusion of materials of the highest value, that the embarrassment of selection has been not the least of the difficulties which I have had to encounter in the execution of my task.' These folios contain drafts, memoranda, letters to the Queen and the Prince, copies of private letters shewn to them, copies of dispatches supplied by the Foreign Office, War Office material, cuttings from the press, etc. But Lytton Strachey, referring to the words of Theodore Martin quoted above, makes the ludicrous misstatement (*Queen Victoria* [1921], p. 197) that 'between 1853 and 1857 fifty folio volumes were filled with the products of his (the Prince's) pen upon the Eastern Question'. One of Strachey's lesser imitators goes one better: 'Under his hand, fifty volumes of memoranda grew' (Hector Bolitho, *Albert the Good* [1932], p. 219). Here is an example of an historical myth in the making. The impression it gives, that the Prince was a desk-tied scribbler, is unfounded and unjust.

Levant; and she claimed that the enormous expansion of Russia since the days of Peter the Great had overturned the balance of power and menaced the security of Europe. This last contention contained an element of truth, and it was decidedly the best for propaganda purposes. The Western Powers, therefore, proclaimed that they were fighting, not for their own interests, but the interests of Europe; and they exerted every effort to draw Austria and Prussia into the war on their side. But the German Powers were not easily caught. As the Saxon Minister, Beust, put it: 'For years the German Courts were trained by Vienna and Berlin in the fear of God and of the Czar Nicholas.'¹ There was a deep-rooted conviction among Conservatives, even in France and Britain,² that Nicholas had saved the world from revolution in 1848 and 1849. This feeling was at its strongest among the petty princes of Germany, who saw in Nicholas their only hope. In Prussia and Austria it was strong too; but it weakened in Austria after Russia invaded Moldavia and Wallachia in the summer of 1853, and definitely menaced Austrian interests in the Balkans. Liberals everywhere in Germany cried out in favour of the Western Powers—Conservatives and particularists in favour of Russia. The result was a tug-of-war in Central Europe. Britain and France tried to drag the German states into the war, Russia to keep them out of it. These diplomatic battles had as much influence upon the fate of nations as the struggle in the Crimea.

During the Crimean War none of the combatants was ever in serious danger; but, had Austria entered it, she would at once have been engaged in a struggle for existence.

¹ *Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand, Count von Beust, written by Himself* (London, 2 vols., 1887), i. 283.

² On 8th September 1853 Lord Londonderry wrote to Lord Clarendon his views on Nicholas. 'The language of England, the Nobles, the Press, and the People (when it must be admitted He saved the world) can hardly have been tamely submitted to by any human being' (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*). I am indebted to Professor Temperley for permission to make use of extracts from Clarendon's private papers.

This was never understood by the allied statesmen when they complained of Austrian caution, which they called Austrian cowardice. Westmorland, British ambassador in Vienna, understood the position thoroughly when he wrote in July 1854: 'The Austrians reproach the Allies for not fighting, and the Allies reproach the Austrians. But the latter have the enemy at their door.'¹ The Prince Consort had, naturally, a better understanding of German problems than most British statesmen; and, from the first, he strongly deprecated the hectoring methods used by the Allies in their approaches to Austria and Prussia. In January he drafted a letter to Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, to warn him of the danger of pressing the German Powers too hard. 'To induce Prussia and Austria to side in the war with us,' he wrote, 'would be most important; and although after our blustering and abuse of them *they* would have to bear the brunt of the war, we might make it desirable for them to run that risk for the advantage they would gain if France joined in a guarantee of their territories. The mere attempt to bully them into going to war with us might, if it failed, force them to take up arms on the opposite side, and whilst making France fight them on the Rhine and in Italy, leave the Emperor of Russia absolute Master of Turkey, and us with our fleet on the High Seas and an object of universal contempt.'² The Prince was certainly wise to counsel the British Ministers to treat Prussia and Austria with somewhat greater respect; but even the most brilliant diplomacy could not have brought them into the war at this stage. In March 1854 Britain and France alone declared war upon Russia.

In the winter of 1853-4 there had been a campaign of

¹ Westmorland to Lady Westmorland, 18th July 1854: *The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland*, edited by her daughter, Lady Rose Weigall (London, 1909), p. 229.

² Draft by Prince Albert: The Queen to Clarendon, 18th January 1854: *Royal Archives (Muniment Room, Windsor Castle)*, G. 9. I gratefully acknowledge the gracious permission of his Majesty the King to quote extracts from the Royal Archives.

detraction against the Prince, and he had actually been accused of being a Russian spy. The Saxe-Coburg house was renowned for its liberal tendencies, and this in itself would have been enough to make him anti-Russian. He was more anti-Russian than several British statesmen—notably the pacific Aberdeen. ‘Even yet Aberdeen cannot rise to the level of the situation,’ he wrote to Stockmar in March; ‘the war is in his eyes “like a civil war, like a war between England and Scotland”!’¹ The Queen wrote to Leopold of Belgium that ‘Aberdeen has to be continually kept up to the mark, and reminded of the danger of any *patch-up* at this moment’.² A little later, Aberdeen made a speech in the House of Lords in which he spoke of Russia with a moderation inconsistent with the war-fever raging in the country; and the Prince drafted a letter hoping that ‘he will not undertake the ungrateful and injurious task of vindicating the Emperor of Russia from any of the exaggerated charges brought against him’.³ Of the enthusiasm of the Prince for the war there is not the slightest doubt; and he was particularly insistent upon its moral aspect—Britain was fighting the battle of Europe. ‘It was not from mere selfishness,’ he wrote to Leopold, ‘and with a view of making cat’s-paws of other Powers, but in order to avert the possibility of war, that England pressed for the *concert Européen*. Austria’s and Prussia’s faint-heartedness and regard for the Russians made our efforts in this direction fruitless. Thereupon England and France alone took upon themselves the burden of protecting the Porte. . . . All Europe, Belgium and Germany included, have the greatest interest in the integrity and independence of the Porte being secured for the future, but a still greater in Russia being defeated and chastised.’⁴ The Prince had little hope that Prussia would ever join the Allies. The erratic King, Frederick

¹ Theodore Martin, iii. 47.

² Copy: the Queen to Leopold, 31 March 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 11.

³ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Aberdeen, 26 June 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 14.

⁴ The Prince to Leopold, 20 July 1854: Theodore Martin, iii. 20-21.

William IV, had written that he was grieved to find Britain 'willing from sympathy with Turkey to hurl ruin and death upon Christian soldiers',¹ and he waxed hysterical over the Alliance, which he called 'the incest of England with France'.² But there were hopes that Austria, whose Balkan interests clashed with Russia, might join the Alliance. To this end, therefore, the Prince devoted his energies.

One of Austria's principal difficulties was that she could not take decisive action against Russia so long as a potentially hostile Prussia and *Bund* remained on her flank. The Prince believed that if the European concert broke down there would be a real danger of a revolutionary war;³ and he seems to have hoped that fear of this might cause the other German states to co-operate with Austria. When the King of Prussia sent a personal representative, Gröben, to Windsor, the Prince confronted him with the spectre of revolution. Gröben subsequently said: 'Que pendant qu'il ne pouvait pas assez se louer de tout ce qui s'était passé entre lui et S.M. la Reine, aussi bien qu'entre lui et L^d Clarendon, il avait été péniblement affecté par la langage *pleine* [*sic*] *de menace* du Prince Albert.'⁴ Some time later the Prince had a conversation with Vitzthum von Eckstaedt, Saxon minister in London. 'If Germany understood her own interests,' he said, 'the war could be ended this very year; but if Austria is prevented from taking any active measures, it may last for years. . . . Should Austria now be compelled to hold her hand, and separate herself from France and England, a revolution in Hungary, Italy, and Germany appears inevit-

¹ Frederick William IV to Prince Albert, 22 December 1853: Heinrich von Sybel, *The Founding of the German Empire by William I*, trans. M. L. Perrin and G. Bradford (New York, 3 vols., 1890-91), ii. 216-17.

² Frederick William IV to Bunsen, 9 January 1854: Leopold von Ranke, *Aus dem Briefwechsel Friedrich Wilhelms IV mit Bunsen* (Leipzig, 1873), p. 323.

³ The Prince to Stockmar, 11 March 1854: Theodore Martin, iii. 39.

⁴ Copy: Malet to Clarendon (private, secret, and confidential), Frankfurt a/M., 30 March 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 11.

able. Hence Germany has the most pressing interest in seeing the war quickly ended, and this result the German Government are perfectly able to achieve.'¹ Vitzthum was not very careful in his reports, and this may well be a gross exaggeration of Albert's words. But the general tenor is clear: he was trying to prevent the other German states from hampering Austria at a critical moment. In this instance it seems that the Prince was not very far-sighted. There had been too much talk of revolution already; and Albert's elder brother, Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, had caused trepidation in Vienna by retailing Napoleon III's schemes for recasting the map of Europe.² The Prince soon saw for himself that fear of revolution was likely to increase the influence of Russia; and after the middle of the year he was always anxious to keep British policy in conservative paths.

On 8 August 1854 Austria bound herself to the 'Four Points', which limited the war aims of the Allies; but she refused to sign a tripartite treaty. In August the Russian troops evacuated Moldavia and Wallachia, and Austrian troops marched in. Though not yet a belligerent, Austria had now adopted a position decidedly hostile to Russia; and the value of her co-operation became correspondingly greater. On 24 August 1854 Clarendon made a strange proposition to the Prince. 'The restoration of Polish independence may be an idle dream,' he declared, 'but things more improbable have come to pass, and as no one can foresee what will arise out of the present war if it be prolonged even to a second campaign, it is well to reflect at least upon eventualities that are not impossible. . . . Does Your Royal Highness think that the question could be safely mooted at Vienna, not as one upon which England has any intention

¹ Vitzthum to Beust, 16 July 1854: Vitzthum von Eckstaedt, *St. Petersburg and London, 1852-1864*, ed. Henry Reeve (London, 2 vols., 1887), i. 110-11.

² See G. B. Henderson, 'Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der napoleonischen Ideen über Polen und Italien während des Krimkrieges' (*Zeitschrift für osteuropäische Geschichte*, Band viii. Heft 4, 1934), reprinted above pp. 15-32.

of acting or even of offering advice, but as meriting the serious consideration of Austria, with reference to her own interests and future tranquillity?"¹ To talk about Poland even in this tentative fashion would have been very indiscreet at this moment. Nothing would have been more likely to drive Austria away from co-operation with the Western Powers. The Prince therefore advised strongly against 'mooting' the question, and the matter was dropped for the meantime.² Though hints about Poland frequently came from Paris, they were henceforward discouraged by the British Government.

The Western Powers had hoped that the Austrian occupation of the Principalities would result in a clash with Russian troops, and thus draw Austria into the war. When this did not happen, they were greatly irritated.³ They then made an effort to persuade Austria to sign a treaty by which she would adopt a still more hostile attitude towards Russia; and when they failed in this endeavour, a decided coolness arose between Austria and the Allies. Buol defended himself warmly against the insinuation that Austria had acted with timidity or bad faith, and said that 'a serious estrangement' might develop unless all knowledge of the diplomatic situation were kept from the public.⁴ The Prince saw that an estrangement from Austria could only harm the allied cause, and wrote to Clarendon on the subject. 'Austria has done more . . .,' he said, 'by the occupation of both Principalities than we could have hoped to accomplish by our allied armies, and shuts the door completely to Russia. I believe she will *not* go to war with Russia this autumn or winter unless compelled to do so, and I don't see what is to compel her. Under these circumstances, it will be of the greatest importance to us *not* to ascertain publicly the certainty of this by any diplo-

¹ Clarendon to the Prince, 24 August 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 16.

² The Prince to Clarendon, 26 August 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 16.

³ Lettre particulière: Colloredo to Buol, 11 September 1854: Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 41.

⁴ Westmorland to Clarendon, 20 September 1854, No. 354: Public Record Office, F.O. 7/436.

matic act, as the doubt is much worse for Russia than for us, paralysing her, whilst it merely annoys us; we should on the contrary show to the world our confidence that Austria will act, and waits only for the right moment.’¹ It seemed that the right moment had come a few days later, when Austria—encouraged by the allied successes in the Crimea—herself proposed a treaty with the Western Powers. Clarendon’s first reaction was to reject the Austrian overture.² He was emboldened by the victory of the Alma, and it was even rumoured that Sebastopol had fallen: so he thought that Austrian help was now superfluous. The Prince thought otherwise, and urged that the Austrian proposals should be carefully considered. On 7th October he drafted a letter: ‘Should the terms of the treaty she means to propose be acceptable, the Queen would look upon its signature as an immense step gained.’³ When Clarendon continued obdurate, the Prince drafted another letter (10th October), which seems at last to have persuaded him not to reject outright the idea of a tripartite treaty. Albert pointed out that ‘the success in the Crimea ought to be followed up by strengthening the alliance of the European Powers, else it may turn out a sterile victory’. He therefore advised ‘a temperate consideration of the Austrian proposals and an amendment of them in those points which seem to require them... and the avoidance of anything which could weaken the *accord*

¹ The Prince to Clarendon, 23 September 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17. Mrs. Twisleton wrote on 12 October 1854: ‘As to Austria, sensible and good judges think that she has done all that could be expected from her, and is inclined to do more. . . . If Austria had not taken the care of the Principalities off their hands, the Allies would not have got to Sebastopol this autumn, so that she really has helped them very much, although not by openly-declared war’ (*Letters of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Twisleton, 1852-62* [London, 1928], p. 239). This was the Prince’s opinion, and Aberdeen’s; but it did not weigh heavily enough with some members of the Cabinet.

² Clarendon to the Queen, 3 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17.

³ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 7 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17. This letter was written at the request of Aberdeen, who was much disturbed by Clarendon’s hostility to Austria. See the Queen to Aberdeen, 7 October 1854 (*Selections from the Correspondence of George, Earl of Aberdeen* [privately printed, 1885], vol. 1854-5, p. 241).

Européen.¹ Cabinet meetings were held on 17 and 20 October, with a most unsatisfactory result. It was agreed that it was vital to secure the co-operation of Austria, but it was found impossible to agree on suitable treaty provisions. The question was thus left entirely in the air, and the initiative was left to others. The efforts of the Prince and of Aberdeen had, however, at least secured that whenever a treaty project should again be produced, it would be considered with all the attention it deserved.

In spite of the failure of the treaty project in October 1854, many tendencies were running strongly in its favour. In conversation with Colloredo, Austrian minister in London, Aberdeen expressed a strong desire for a treaty. Colloredo commented: 'Il desire un traité avec l'Autriche comme frein contre les exigences (et) les prétensions qui pourraient être formées si la guerre se prolonge. Il croit qu'elle se prolongera.' After a second campaign, Aberdeen had declared, the demands of the Allies might be inordinately raised, and might even embrace the reconstruction of Poland.² This analysis of motive is acute; Aberdeen and the moderates desired an Austrian alliance, not so much against Russia as against the intransigent party in the Cabinet and the country. On the French side, the desire for a treaty with Austria was even stronger—for this was part of the scheme for splitting up the old 'Northern Alliance' of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Both Britain and France, moreover, were influenced by the gloomy reports now coming from the Crimea. The French therefore drew up still another treaty project, which was communicated to Clarendon on the evening of 1 November 1854. This draft ingeniously concealed, without eliminating, the points which the British had been unable to stomach in previous French schemes. Clarendon was much pleased by the new draft. 'I think it

¹ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 10 October 1854. Printed in the *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ed. Benson and Esher (London, 2nd ed., 1908), iii. 48-9.

² Lettre particulière: Colloredo to Buol, 21 October 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 41.

excellent,' he wrote to Aberdeen, 'and that we ought to be only too happy if Austria will agree to it.'¹ In a memorandum written for Cabinet purposes he declared: 'I quite agree with the French Government as to the importance of binding Austria to us, and think that if she could be induced to agree to this Treaty a great step would be gained.'² Britain substantially agreed to the French scheme; and the efforts of the Prince in the previous month probably contributed materially to this result. The next step was to send the scheme to Vienna, where it was cordially received by Buol. He pointed out various clauses that were not acceptable to Austria, and sent back a counter-project, along with a request that the war aims of the Allies should be more clearly defined. If Austria was going to fight, he said, she had a right to know precisely the terms on which the Allies would be prepared to lay down their arms. This request was particularly embarrassing, since at this date it was becoming clear that Russia was going to agree to the four points. If Russia conceded so much, a tripartite treaty with Austria would not draw Austria into the war, but would draw the Allies into peace negotiations. On 19 November Clarendon wrote to the Prince, pointing out these difficulties and asking his opinion.³ The Prince worked out the question fully in a memorandum,⁴ on which a member of the Cabinet who saw it a few days later commented: 'I was delighted with it. It was indeed a very able paper.'⁵ The Prince's argument was that the four points in themselves were enough: 'We have, therefore, not to ask at present anything beyond the Four Points, but rather to *define more fully* the precise mean-

¹ Clarendon to Aberdeen, 2 November 1854 (*Aberdeen Correspondence*, 1854-5, p. 265).

² Memorandum by Clarendon, 2 November 1854 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*).

³ Clarendon to the Prince, 19 November 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 19.

⁴ Memorandum of 19 November 1854: Theodore Martin, iii. 163-5.

⁵ Argyll saw the Memorandum on 28 November 1854 (*George Douglas Eighth Duke of Argyll, Autobiography and Memoirs* [London, 2 vols., 1906], i. 506-7.)

ing we attach to their elastic terms.' If the allied demands did not go beyond the four points, he said, 'Austria can derive from them no pretext to fly from her engagements towards us.' This attitude was adopted by the Cabinet; and, though it was not likely to prove satisfactory to Austria in the long run, it contented her for a sufficient time to secure the signature of the treaty. On 22 November the Prince was able to write: 'The Queen . . . rejoices at the acceptance of the Treaty, which binds us to nothing, and leaves every future chance open to us.' He at the same time warned Clarendon that it was unfair to accuse Austria of intrigue and double-dealing, and that 'the proposals now made by her admit of the more natural interpretation of being honestly meant'.¹ The tripartite treaty between Britain, France, and Austria was signed on 2 December 1854.² Of the allied belligerents, France was by far the more enthusiastic for this new alliance. That Britain adhered at all was largely due to the persistent pressure of the Court, in its anxiety to preserve a sort of 'European front' against Russia.

The next episode in which the Crown played an important part was not diplomatic but political. On 23 January 1855 Parliament met; and Roebuck gave notice in the House of Commons of a motion for a committee to enquire into the conduct of the war. Russell immediately tendered his resignation, saying that he did not see how the motion could be faced. On the 24th, Aberdeen came to Windsor and told the Queen that the Cabinet had come 'to the unanimous determination to tender their resignations'. The Queen protested against this, and pointed out the difficulty

¹ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 22 November 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 19. Partly printed by Theodore Martin, iii. 166.

² Under this treaty the signatories agreed that, if by the end of the year peace had not been secured on the basis of the four points, they would deliberate on the best means of securing the object of the alliance. Professor Bell asserts (*Lord Palmerston*, ii. 126-7) that under it Austria was to send an ultimatum summoning Russia to negotiate on the four points. Unfortunately for this contention, the Russian acceptance of the four points was known in Vienna on 20 November 1854, and the treaty was signed on 2 December 1854.

of forming another ministry. 'Lord Palmerston she could not confide the Government to, and Lord John would not be able to form one.' The Queen therefore insisted 'that Lord Aberdeen should make one appeal to the cabinet to stand by her, which he promised to do to the best of his ability, but without hope of success'.¹ The Queen's effort to persuade the Government not to resign in this ignominious fashion was successful. On the 25th, Aberdeen was able to report 'that they agreed upon retaining office at present for the purpose of meeting Mr. Roebuck's motion. They expect (most of them, at least) to be beat, and to have to resign, but they think it more honourable to be driven out than to run away'.² The forebodings of the majority of the Cabinet were well founded. On 29 January Roebuck's motion was carried by 305 votes to 148; and Aberdeen immediately resigned.

The Queen properly called upon Lord Derby to form a ministry, since the Protectionist party had by its vote chiefly contributed to the fall of the Government. Derby complained that he lacked able men, and said he would have to approach Palmerston and some of the Peelites. Palmerston was necessary because of his popularity; but Derby believed that though he 'kept up his sprightly manners of youth, it was evident that his day had gone by'—an opinion in which the Queen concurred.³ Though Palmerston was friendly, Derby was unable to form a ministry, to the everlasting disgust of Disraeli. Lansdowne declined the commission; and Russell, after a vain attempt, found that his late colleagues, would not serve under him. This left Palmerston *l'inévitable* as he called himself. Walewski had instantly written to Prince Albert, asserting that any ministry in which Palmer-

¹ Memorandum by Prince Albert, 25 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23. Printed, with some omissions, in *Letters*, iii. 72-3.

² Memorandum dictated by the Prince, written by the Queen, 25 January 1855. Printed in *Letters*, iii. 74-5.

³ Memorandum dictated by the Prince, written by the Queen, 31 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23. Printed, with some omissions, in *Letters*, iii. 80-2.

ston and Clarendon did not figure, 'ne répondrait que très imparfaitement aux nécessités de la situation'.¹ When Derby was shown this letter, he called it 'the most audacious thing he had ever seen';² and Palmerston's cause indeed gained nothing from these French manœuvres, against which he would have been the first to protest. But the Queen could not long resist the chosen of the people. Her feelings are summarised in a memorandum of 1 February. 'If Lord Lansdowne refuses, there is Lord Palmerston *himself*. I know this would be very objectionable in many respects, and personally not agreeable to me, but *I think of nothing* but the country, and the preservation of its institutions, and *my own* personal feelings would be sunk if only the efficiency of the government could be obtained. *If the Peelites and Whigs* would serve *under* Lord Palmerston, *I should not* apprehend the consequences—for they would restrain him from mischief, and Palmerston *himself* in *that position* would feel the weight and responsibility of *such a position* in a manner that would make him feel very differently to what he has hitherto done, as a subordinate.'³ This memorandum does great honour to the Queen. The hostility of the Court to Lord Palmerston, and the reasons for that hostility, were no secret then, and are no secret now. But a ministerial crisis, in the midst of a great war, found the Court more patriotic, more self-sacrificing, than many British statesmen. The Queen not only called on Lord Palmerston to form a government—that was perhaps inevitable. She gave him every assistance in her power; and on 6 February the Prince went so far as to urge the late Prime Minister, Aberdeen, to join

¹ Walewski to the Prince, 30 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23.

² Memorandum by Prince Albert, 1 February 1855 (*Letters*, iii. 83-5). It is fairly clear that Derby did not obey the Prince's injunction of secrecy, for on 23 March 1855 Malmesbury wrote: 'I have positive proof that the French ambassador, Walewski, throughout the late events, has been most active in the intrigue which placed and kept Lord Palmerston in office, both as against Lord John and Lord Derby' (*Memoirs of an ex-Minister*).

³ Memorandum of the Queen, 1 February 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 23. Lytton Strachey (*Queen Victoria*, p. 201) says that the Queen called on Palmerston 'without reluctance'.

Palmerston's ministry.¹ Aberdeen begged that he might be spared this painful sacrifice, and persuaded his Peelite friends to join Palmerston without doing so himself. On the same day (6 February) Palmerston kissed hands as Prime Minister. The new Cabinet omitted Newcastle, Aberdeen, and Russell, but was otherwise a reconstruction of the Cabinet that had been so decisively beaten on Roebuck's motion.

The Court had not pursued this patriotic course without deep misgivings. 'I had no other alternative,' wrote the Queen to King Leopold, a little ruefully. Palmerston had not been Prime Minister many days before an incident occurred which shewed that the old conflict with the Court might easily break out again. On 8 February he addressed a letter to Napoleon III, in which he announced the formation of his government, and made a most unfortunate reference to 'le mauvais état de l'armée anglaise'. This letter was not shewn to the Queen before dispatch, and no copy was sent to her until two days later.² The Prince's views are to be found in a Memorandum on the subject: 'This letter gave us great uneasiness. Besides the unworthiness of its tone, and particularly of those passages relating to the army—('le mauvais état de l'armée anglaise'; what an admission for an English Prime Minister to make to a foreign Sovereign!!)—the sort of private correspondence, which Lord Palmerston means to establish with the Emperor Napoleon, is a novel and unconstitutional practice. . . . It is evident that after his former misdeeds and the public notice which the Queen was obliged to take of them, he is now willing, perhaps even anxious, not to sin in the same manner again, and openly to communicate what he is doing, and it is of the highest importance that he should do so. If the Queen were to object to his plan, he would at once both calumniate us for it on the grounds of inveterate hostility to the Emperor for family reasons, and trick us by carrying on his correspond-

¹ *Letters*, iii. 98.

² Palmerston to the Queen, 10 February 1855 (*Letters*, iii. 105).

ence secretly. On the other hand, he may have laid a trap for obtaining the Queen's sanction to a proceeding otherwise irregular and probably very dangerous!' ¹ The Prince certainly paints Palmerston in unnecessarily lurid colours; for he was always careless and flippant, rather than a conscious enemy of the Queen's prerogatives. Yet the essential justice of the Prince's complaint is undoubted. Palmerston's words about the British army were unnecessary and unworthy; and the practice which Palmerston seemed about to initiate was very dubious from a constitutional point of view. This new provocation makes the Court's continued support of Palmerston the more laudable and remarkable. A few days later Palmerston wrote to his brother: 'I have no reason to complain of the least want of cordiality or confidence on the part of the Court.' ² When a few months later the Peelites, especially Gladstone, were attacking Palmerston's Government, the Prince wrote to Aberdeen 'a fiery letter' on the subject, and after two hours' conversation persuaded him 'that Palmerston has acted precisely as Aberdeen would have acted'. ³ There is thus every evidence that, although the Court could not yet feel full confidence in Palmerston, it gave him unstinted support in the difficult tasks with which he had to wrestle.

Apart from the siege of Sebastopol, the most difficult task was still the tripartite treaty of 2 December 1854, and the consequences flowing from it. Russia had accepted the four points, and (on 7 January 1855) a more stringent definition of them. In spite of this, the Western Powers were anxious to avoid negotiation. They could not have done so, however, without causing a breach with Austria. So, with very bad grace, they agreed to hold conferences at Vienna; and the first meeting took place on 15 March 1855. The first

¹ Memorandum by Prince Albert, 11 February 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 24.

² 15 February 1855: Evelyn Ashley, *Life and Correspondence of Viscount Palmerston* (London, 2 vols., 1879), ii. 306.

³ The Prince to Aberdeen, 3 June 1855, and the Prince to Stockmar, 7 June 1855: Theodore Martin, iii. 289-93. 'Fiery' is a translation of *geharnischten*.

British plenipotentiary was Lord John Russell. Early in April the French foreign minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, arrived as the first French plenipotentiary. The importance of these negotiations is demonstrated by the men chosen to represent the allied belligerents; and indeed peace almost resulted.¹ Negotiations broke down on the third point, which stated that Russian preponderance in the Black Sea should cease. Drouyn and Russell, however, agreed to a scheme produced by Buol, based on the idea that the Russian fleet might be limited to its 1853 effective. They hastened home to press this scheme on their respective Governments; and, had they been successful in their endeavour, peace would probably have resulted. The first reaction, both in Britain and France, was to reject the proposal out of hand. Prince Albert commented that 'to limit the Russian naval power to that existing in 1853 would . . . be simply *de perpétuer et légaliser la prépondérance de la Russie dans la Mer Noire*'.² The Prince, however, changed his view of the matter on further consideration; and the importance that was attached to the Prince's opinion is shewn by the way that those who were in favour of the project, and those who were against, competed for his support. On 24 April, for example, Buol wrote to the Prince's brother, Ernest, insisting that 'the true counterpoise against the growth of Russia's power only lies in the *permanence* of this system of alliances, which has been called forth by Russia's encroachments; and both Prussia, in spite of all her vacillations, and the German Courts, in spite of all their desire for Russian protection, must, in the course of time, necessarily join this system'.³ Ernest used his influence

¹ For the details of these negotiations, see G. B. Henderson, 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, October 1935, reprinted above pp. 33-67.

² Memorandum by Prince Albert, 25 April 1855: Theodore Martin, iii. 262-3.

³ *Memoirs of Ernest II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, translated by Percy Andreae (London, 4 vols., 1888-90), iii. 167-9. This was Buol's most persistent argument. On 17 April 1855 he telegraphed to Colloredo: 'Faites valoir le grand intérêt de la conservation de l'alliance et du système politique qui en découle' (Vienna, Pol. Arch, England, viii. Fasc. 44).

with his brother in this sense. On the other side Cowley, British ambassador in Paris, who hated the Austrian scheme, wrote to Clarendon that if Britain rejected it, he should get the Prince to write to Napoleon. 'Let H.R.H. appeal particularly to the Emperor's honour, and beg H.M. to consider what France will say six months hence, when his troops are come back *unbeaten*, but having obtained nothing.'¹

Prince Albert consulted Baron Stockmar as soon as Russell returned, and before the attitude of the French was known. Stockmar said that 'he agrees so far with the opinion entertained now by Lord John, that there are five chances against one, that if we don't conclude peace *now* on the Austrian proposals, *modified and amended in the interest of England and France*, we may be forced at a *later period* to come to peace on more disadvantageous terms'.² The respect felt by the Prince for Stockmar's views probably accounts partly, at least, for the complete change of opinion that now took place. On 25 April the Queen had written: 'How Lord John Russell and M. Drouyn can recommend such proposals to our acceptance is beyond her comprehension!' ³ and the Prince's memorandum of that date was similar in outlook. But by 3 May the Prince had swung right round. He now propounded Buol's idea that a permanent system of alliances was enough to hold Russia back, and that such an arrangement might do instead of material guarantees. His memorandum began: 'A difficulty existing in enforcing material guarantees, let us consider the value of diplomatic guarantees. There is only one kind of *diplomatic* guarantee that appears to me to be an equivalent for the material one given up with the principle of limitation, viz. that of a *general European defensive league* for Turkey as against Russia. . . . Can such a defensive coalition be obtained? *I think it may.*'

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, 2 May 1855 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*).

² Baron Stockmar to the Queen, 30 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29.

³ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 25 April 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29.

The conclusion was that 'if Austria, Prussia, and Germany will give the *diplomatic* guarantee for the future which I have above detailed, we shall consider this an equivalent for the *material* guarantee. . . .'¹ This advice was not in favour of a pure and simple acceptance of the project. But it fully adopted Buol's contention that diplomatic guarantees would be effectual, and was certainly in favour of further parleying. The degree of influence exercised by the Prince's views on the Cabinet can hardly be assessed, but it is likely that it was considerable. Palmerston and the more warlike elements were fought to a standstill. On 26 April Palmerston had bluntly threatened resignation if the new scheme was entertained;² but by 3 May he was much more subdued, and regarded acceptance as a possibility.³ Cabinets held on 3 and 4 May left the question open until the decision of Napoleon III was known; and, if he had accepted the Austrian scheme, it is fairly clear that Britain would have accepted it too. Britain was normally more bellicose than France throughout the Crimean War; but, on this occasion, it was Napoleon's adverse decision which tipped the scales against peace. Had Napoleon decided otherwise, the Crown might have played a most important part in the shaping of British policy.

The Prince's readiness, on 3 May, to accept diplomatic guarantees as sufficient was in harmony with his old contention that the war was being fought in the interests of Europe, and that this should be constantly emphasised. He was therefore filled with anxiety when the closing of the Vienna Conferences resulted in a diplomatic coolness with Austria. The Western Powers declared themselves unbound by any of the decisions of the Conferences, and acknowledged the right of Sardinia to be represented at any future Conferences for the restoration of peace. The

¹ Memorandum by Prince Albert, 3 May 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 29. Partly printed by Theodore Martin, iii. 270-3; but the comment on it is erroneous.

² Palmerston to Clarendon, 26 April 1855: Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon* (London, 2 vols., 1913), ii. 81.

³ Palmerston to Clarendon, 3 May 1855 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*).

Austrians, on their side, placed their army on a peace footing once more. The diplomatic structure of 2 December 1854—always somewhat precarious—now seemed to be crumbling beyond repair. By 23 July 1855 Clarendon was writing that he ‘cannot conceal his apprehension that the tendency of events is towards a complete understanding between Austria and Prussia, and then, as a natural consequence, between those two Powers and Russia’.¹ The Prince agreed that a revival of the Holy Alliance was possible, and urged that this should be prevented by the adoption of a friendly policy towards Austria. ‘Although Austria acts entirely in her own interest,’ he wrote, ‘and for objects of her own, in forming the barrier between Russia and Turkey on the Pruth, our cause, which is that of Turkey, derives the greatest benefits from it, which ought to be justly valued. If Russia were to repeat the invasion of last year, it is clear that it would go very hard with Turkey, that we should be unable to give her any assistance, that the withdrawal of all Turkish forces from the Crimea would much weaken our position there, and the peace which would at some time or other have to be made would be much more to the advantage of Russia. It appears to me, therefore, that if we derive this benefit from the position taken up by Austria, this is all we can reasonably expect, and that this will be in little danger, if we don’t alienate Austria by *parading* a breach with her, or at least a totally separate policy.’² Clarendon agreed with the Prince, but took an even gloomier view of the situation. He was convinced that ‘nothing which England or France can do, *unless they obtain great military successes*, will prevent the political fusion of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, and the consequent revival of the Holy Alliance’.³ Clarendon, however, wrote to Elliot (British Chargé d’Affaires in Vienna) in a conciliatory manner. He was to tell Buol that ‘we are very far from wish-

¹ Clarendon to the Queen, 23 July 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 35.

² Draft: the Prince to Clarendon, 24 July 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 35. The letter sent was dated 25 July 1855.

³ Clarendon to the Prince, 26 July 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 35.

ing that the Treaty of 2 December should be abrogated', and that the signatories of that treaty still occupied a common ground.¹ Relations with Austria became somewhat better; and the fall of Sebastopol on 8 September 1855 gave the Allies the great military success for which they had been striving so long. Negotiation was now again possible, and the flow of diplomatic ink began once more.

In Britain there was no eagerness to end the war. The failure of the attack on the Redan meant that the fall of Sebastopol redounded to the credit of French rather than of British arms. Court and parliament, ministers and people, were all eager for a third campaign, which they were convinced would really bring Russia to her knees. But the sentiments of the French were very different. A war on the Rhine would be popular, a war to free Poland and Italy. This trial by combat on a remote peninsula—a war for narrow objects which were felt to be mainly British—appealed no longer to the French Government or people. It was in Paris and Vienna, therefore, that new peace terms were devised. On 29 October 1855 Hübner, Austrian minister in Paris, was writing: 'J'ai le pressentiment que la fin de la crise approche—cette crise qui a commencé par le rejet de nos propositions, et qui se terminera par une entente parfaite, claire, et sincère, ou par un refroidissement et une séparation complète.'² Bourqueney, French minister in Vienna, visited Paris, and on his return entered into negotiations with Buol—much to the alarm of Clarendon.³ On 14 November an agreement was initialled at Vienna by Bourqueney and Buol. Rough preliminaries of peace were drawn up (on the basis of the four points), and it was agreed that Austria should send these to St. Petersburg, as an ultimatum, when the Allies of 2 December should have reached full agreement on the sub-

¹ Copy: Clarendon to Elliot, 25 July 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 35. Clarendon said that he found private letters carried more weight with Buol than dispatches; so this letter was private.

² Lettre particulière: Hübner to Buol, 29 October 1855: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 50.

³ Clarendon to the Queen, 12 November 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 40.

ject. France, by concerting terms in this manner behind the back of her ally, put Britain in a most awkward predicament. As Clarendon put it later, Walewski's committing himself to these terms had the result that 'he has been bound in honour and consistency to oppose our amendments, and to justify himself in so doing by treating them as futile, factious, offensive, etc.'¹ Palmerston's first impression of the new project was not unfavourable: 'with some additions and improvements these conditions would do.'² But he foresaw trouble over these additions and improvements, and wrote a stiff letter to Persigny in which he said that a discussion of the details was essential. British irritation was natural, for the French had behaved very badly; but Palmerstonian intransigence went a little too far when, at this early stage, he wrote: 'La nation anglaise serait enchantée d'une bonne paix qui assurât les objets de la guerre, mais plutôt que d'être entraînée à signer une paix à des conditions insuffisantes, elle préférerait continuer la guerre sans d'autres alliés que la Turquie, et elle se sent tout-à-fait en état d'en soutenir le fardeau et de se tirer ainsi d'affaire.'³ Palmerston felt able to adopt this attitude because he was convinced that 'the French government will not dare to leave us in the lurch'.⁴ The blusterings of Palmerston and the intrigues of Walewski shewed how ill-assorted a pair were Britain and France; and moderate men on both sides of the channel were soon anxious for the safety of the alliance.

The Court was as indignant as Palmerston at the French attempt to force Britain's hand. Napoleon wrote a letter to the Queen in which he complained that Britain shewed a

¹ Copy: Clarendon to Cowley, 14 December 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 41.

² Palmerston to Clarendon, 20 November 1855 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*).

³ Copy: Palmerston to Persigny, 21 November 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 41. On 12 March 1856 Clarendon wrote to Granville that Napoleon 'to this day has not got over Palmerston's letter to Persigny, saying that we were quite able to carry on the war alone with the aid of Sardinia and Turkey' (Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 119).

⁴ Palmerston to Clarendon, 1 December 1855 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*). This conviction was not necessarily well founded, for Napoleon III left Sardinia in the lurch in 1859.

tendency 'spontaneously to renounce the support of Austria for microscopical advantages'.¹ The Prince drew up a reply in which he said that the Queen would not be influenced by 'any wounded feelings of *amour propre* at the Emperor's having single-handed come to a complete understanding with Austria, and having then brought the whole agreement, cut and dry, before us for our mere acceptance, putting us in the disagreeable position of either having to accept what we have not even been allowed fully to understand, or to take the responsibility of breaking down this agreement'. Britain, he said, could not be bound by the precise *rédaction* offered her, and the modifications she suggested were certainly not microscopical. Clarendon thought that 'perhaps it might be better not to quote the Emperor's ill-humoured words', and the draft was accordingly modified. The alterations in the draft were not made in order to stiffen it: rather the reverse. The Court gave its fullest support to the resistance offered to the French pretension to force terms of peace upon an unwilling ally; and this letter, which was dispatched on 26 November 1855, told Napoleon as much.²

Prince Albert, however, well understood the precarious position in which Britain would find herself if France made peace and left Britain in the lurch. He was not gifted with the sanguine temperament of Palmerston; and he saw that this calamity, though not probable, was at least a possibility. On 29 November he drafted a letter to Clarendon in which he said 'that it may be all very well to make improvements on the Austrian proposal in the cabinet, but that, if the responsibility of defeating it fall on this country, her position will become a *most dangerous one*! For there is no disguising

¹ Napoleon III to the Queen, 22 November 1855. Translated by Theodore Martin, iii. 393-6 (French version printed in Appendix, 524-6).

² In the *Royal Archives*, G. 40-1, are (i) a draft of this letter by the Prince; (ii) a fair copy of the draft, with comments by Clarendon; (iii) a copy in French, endorsed 'M. Van de Weyer' in the Prince's hand, altered in accordance with Clarendon's advice; and (iv) a fair copy in French: the Queen to Napoleon III, 26 November 1855. English version printed by Theodore Martin, iii. 397-402 (French version printed in Appendix, 526-31.)

the fact that, if the French nation is determined not to support the war any longer in its present condition, all attempts to constrain it to do so must recoil upon us.’¹ While the British Cabinet debated the Austrian proposals, there was a fever of impatience at Vienna to send the ultimatum off, and in Paris there was the greatest anxiety lest the propitious moment might be lost. The Prince grew more and more uneasy as negotiations continued, and still the ultimatum could not be agreed upon. Disturbing rumours came from Paris: Baron Seebach—Saxon minister and son-in-law of the Russian chancellor—was engaged in conversations with Walewski. On 12 December the Prince drafted a letter which voiced his apprehensions clearly: ‘The Queen must repeat her anxiety that no punctiliousness about particular wordings of clauses, etc. etc., should let the cabinet overlook the position we should get into if France, tired of *refinements*, were to agree upon her terms with Russia. The danger was great enough whilst we had to fear an understanding between France and Austria, but now it is Russia herself who has begun to treat with France.’² How necessary it was for these views to influence the Cabinet is seen from an impatient letter written by Napoleon to Persigny on the following day: ‘Je déplore vivement les quid pro quos, et les légèretés commises dernièrement, au milieu d’une grave négociation. . . . Comment diable ne s’entend-t-on pas, lorsqu’on a le même intérêt, les mêmes intentions, et le même but?’³ Though, in these circumstances, the wisdom of the Prince’s arguments cannot be gainsaid, Palmerston received them brutally when they were transmitted to him by Clarendon. ‘The Queen does not seem to understand what she writes about,’ he roundly declared. ‘There is no *chicane* in the case, and we are not standing out about *refinements* or words—we are objecting to things, and to things

¹ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 29 November 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 41.

² Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 12 December 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 41.

³ Copy: Napoleon to Persigny, 13 December 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 41.

of great importance.¹ The rights and wrongs of this case can hardly be discussed in detail without a study of the points actually at issue. On the whole, the Prince was right and Palmerston was wrong. Palmerston took the robust view that Britain was a Great Power, and he was the Prime Minister—and he therefore intended to have his own way, whatever France or Austria or Russia thought about it. The Prince adopted the saner attitude that it took two to make a compromise, that Britain must therefore look sympathetically on France's point of view, and that undue intransigence would make Britain universally detested—which would hardly be a source of strength.² Clarendon on the whole tended towards the Prince's opinion, and his conciliatory influence prevented the friction between Palmerston and the Court from becoming serious.³ Austria accepted most of the British modifications, and Britain withdrew some: so the ultimatum was eventually dispatched, and accepted at St. Petersburg. This clash of wills between Palmerston and the Court is typical of many other episodes. Perhaps the Prince and the Premier—the greatest imaginable contrast—were on the whole an admirable combination for conducting negotiations of this sort, always stipulating the presence of Clarendon to keep the peace between them. Palmerston's brusqueness and obstinacy secured Britain the best terms possible: and the Prince's moderation helped to prevent this obstinacy from being pushed too far.

The Crown's influence on diplomacy was thus always on the side of caution, and in favour of securing a 'European Concert' against Russia. Several examples have been given

¹ Palmerston to Clarendon, 13 December 1855 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*). One of the points at issue at this date was whether Austria had a right to object to representative institutions in the Principalities. Clarendon agreed with the Prince that Austria should be humoured; but Palmerston retorted, 'that is just the doctrine of the Holy Alliance'.

² The arguments are marshalled in a Memorandum by the Prince, 25 January 1856: *Royal Archives*, G. 43.

³ Clarendon considered that the Court did not always do justice to Palmerston (Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *Life of the Second Earl Granville* [London, 2 vols., 1905], i. 120).

of how this led to the Prince's advising conciliatory language towards Austria. Prussia was a more difficult problem. Frederick William IV was somewhat unbalanced mentally; and Prussia's policy was timid and vacillating. This was very useful for Russia, which was suffering severely from the allied blockade: for trade with Prussia and through Prussia played a considerable part in mitigating these sufferings. Britain and France displayed great irritation at Prussia's attitude, although she, as a sovereign and independent state, was fully entitled to follow any policy she chose. They adopted a haughty tone, and lavished insults upon Prussia on every possible occasion. Prince Albert was no friend of Prussia's policy, which he regarded as unworthy of the Power that would, he hoped, ultimately unite Germany.¹ In private he was as bitter and scathing as Palmerston. But he had enough forethought to see that to heap gratuitous insults on Prussia, through the normal diplomatic channels, could do the allied cause no conceivable good—and might indeed do it harm, should Prussia be driven into the arms of Russia. The Prince therefore consistently counselled moderation.

When the Austrian ultimatum was sent to St. Petersburg the Prussian Government did everything in its power to persuade the Czar to accept it. Valentin Esterházy, the bearer of the ultimatum, wrote: 'Je ne saurais assez me louer de mes rapports avec mon collègue de Prusse qui dans les circonstances présentes m'appuye franchement et jusqu'aux dernières limites qui lui sont tracées par ses instruc-

¹ Aberdeen said 'the Prince's views were generally sound and wise, with one exception, which was his violent and incorrigible German unionism. He goes all lengths with Prussia' (15 September 1849: Greville's *Journal* [London, 8 vols., 1896], vi. 305). See also Greville to Reeve, 21 September 1849: A. H. Johnson, *The Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve, 1836-65* (London, 1924), p. 192. The Prince's views were commented on abroad, e.g. on 22 January 1849 Meyendorff (Russian minister in Berlin) wrote to Nesselrode: 'Léopold est mécontent de son ancien chirurgien, Stockmar, parcequ'il entretient le Prince Albert dans ses propres rêveries sur l'unité allemande' (Peter von Meyendorff, *Politischer und privater Briefwechsel, 1826-63*, ed. Otto Hoetzsch [Berlin und Leipzig, 3 vols., 1923] ii. 148).

tions.’¹ Frederick William wrote a private letter to the Czar, in which he said that, if the war continued, there was a danger of revolution. ‘Les passions subversives une fois déchainées qui pourrait calculer les suites du débordement universel?’² Therefore Prussia, though friendly towards the Czar, was at this moment following a policy much in the interest of the Western Powers. Indeed, Russia was as likely to yield to friendly advice as to menace. Nevertheless, Clarendon chose this very moment to propose to send a violently hostile dispatch to Berlin. A list of the offences attributed to Prussia was drawn up, and the dispatch concluded: ‘Baron Manteuffel will accordingly not be surprised to learn that the neutrality which Prussia for a time professed to maintain is now considered by H.M.’s Govt to be at an end.’³ Prince Albert at once drew up a letter saying that the Queen could not agree to this dispatch. Prussia’s policy, he said, had naturally caused great irritation: ‘but when the draft concludes with a declaration to Prussia that England “*considers her neutrality as now at an end*”, this is tantamount to a declaration of war!’⁴ Clarendon appeared a little astonished by this healthy gust of common sense. He at once replied that the draft could not go if it could be interpreted as a declaration of war, since that was very far from his intention.⁵ The draft, however, can bear no other meaning than that attributed to it by the Prince; and it was indeed an astonishing state of affairs that the Foreign Secretary had to have explained to him the meaning of his own words. The draft was duly modified before its dispatch; and the Prince had once again sensibly sweetened the atmosphere of violence and injustice that invariably accompanies wars.

¹ Esterházy to Buol, 12 January 1856, No. 2 E: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 39.

² December 1855: Copy in *Royal Archives*, G. 42.

³ Draft: Clarendon to Bloomfield, 8 January 1856: *Royal Archives*, G. 42.

⁴ Draft by Prince Albert: the Queen to Clarendon, 11 January 1856 (*Letters*, iii. 161). Granville agreed with the Prince (Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, i. 140).

⁵ Clarendon to the Queen, 11 January 1856: *Royal Archives*, G. 42.

The Crown continued to counsel moderation during the negotiations of the Congress of Paris, which brought the war to an end. Clarendon went to Paris as the first British plenipotentiary, and Palmerston therefore found himself in direct control of the Foreign Office once more—for the first time since his dismissal in 1851. He at once showed a tendency to revert to his old high-handed ways. Granville wrote to Clarendon: 'The cabinet are delighted with your letters and dispatches, as they are dribbled out to them staccato, word by word, from the mouth of the Premier. Some of the cabinet grumble inaudibly at the drafts of dispatches to you being always circulated after they are sent.'¹ The Queen grumbled too—but not inaudibly. When she found that Palmerston was sending telegrams to Clarendon without her seeing the drafts, she wrote: 'The Queen *quite* feels the importance of sending these replies with as little delay as possible, but she hopes that when they contain directions as to the line to be taken in Conference on the points upon which peace and war will depend, he will give her an opportunity of seeing them *before* they are sent.'² Palmerston replied on the same day, and said that he would attend to the Queen's desire in the matter. The Queen thus took care to retain her supervision over dispatches, a control which would prevent Palmerston from carrying his intransigence to extravagant lengths. At Paris, the negotiations were in good hands. Clarendon, though he stood up for the British point of view to the utmost, knew when to make concessions with a good grace. He had a better grasp of realities than his chief. 'Whatever Palmerston in his jaunty mood may say,' he wrote, 'we could not have made war alone, for

¹ 1 March 1856 (*MSS. Clarendon Papers*). Clarendon replied (8 March): 'I thought that some of Palmerston's early telegrams and dispatches had not been seen by the cabinet, and I was glad to learn from you that they had not, for it was nonsense to write to me what Russia ought to do. However, as you may suppose, they made no impression on me beyond a little momentary irritation, and I have taken no notice of any of them in my public dispatches' (Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 119).

² Copy: the Queen to Palmerston, 25 February 1856: *Royal Archives*, G. 45.

we should have had all Europe against us at once, and the United States would soon have followed in the train.’¹ The Queen and the Prince were well aware of this, and used their influence to secure Clarendon a freedom of personal judgment in his difficult task. For example, when the awkward problem of the Bessarabian frontier arose, the Queen counselled ‘that Lord Clarendon should not be left without the power to do what may appear to him the best, on a full appreciation of the peculiar circumstances of which he alone will be able to judge at the time’.² Clarendon was accordingly given the necessary freedom of action, which he used on 8 March 1856 to abandon part of the demands about Bessarabia. If Britain had been unduly obstinate at this time, a separation from France must have occurred, with deplorable results. The Court played an important part in averting this danger.

Kinglake, in his classic *Invasion of the Crimea*, sees fit to be vituperative on the subject of Prince Albert’s influence. ‘The Consort,’ he declares, ‘seems to have imagined that his ceaseless endeavours to understand, to check and control the torrent of public business which rushed in those days through the Foreign Office, were labours of no small moment.’ He sneers at ‘that all-enlightening wisdom which he and his friend Baron Stockmar were accustomed to ascribe to each other’.³ Sir Theodore Martin’s *Life of the Prince Consort* is indeed sometimes written in terms of adulation which, though natural in a work intended for the hands of a sorrowing widow, seem to lay too strong an emphasis on the part played by the Prince. In a reaction against Sir Theodore’s estimate justice has not always been done, though few have gone so far as Kinglake’s ill-natured and virulent abuse. A consideration of the evidence of the Crimean period shews that Sir Theodore’s picture, if a little

¹ Clarendon to Granville, 12 March 1856 (Maxwell, *Clarendon*, ii. 119).

² Copy: the Queen to Palmerston, 28 February 1856: *Royal Archives*, G.45.

³ 6th ed. (London, 9 vols., 1877), i. 12-13

overdrawn, is infinitely more accurate than Kinglake's. The Prince was thoroughly British in his outlook, and never allowed family interest or personal prejudice to colour his advice. His counsel was well-pondered and moderate, and sometimes exercised considerable influence. He was able to stand up to Palmerston, and help in preventing him from leading British policy into dangerous paths. In short, under his care the Crown played the part reserved for it under a constitutional monarchy, and played it well.

THE TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FOUR
POINTS, DECEMBER 1854¹

The Crimean War, which 'took longer to get itself declared than any war in history', was throughout a war of diplomats as well as a war of soldiers. Negotiations for the ending of the conflict continued, almost without cessation, throughout its course. One of the reasons for this peculiarity was that, as La Gorce has remarked: 'On se battait sans trop savoir pourquoi: on ne se battait d'ailleurs que mieux'. (The struggle indeed differed from the wars of Bismarck; for even the statesmen in control of the countries concerned scarcely knew the end at which they were aiming. This could hardly fail to be the case in a war which was unwanted, except by the Turks, the result of diplomatic drift and governmental incompetence among all the Great Powers. (If the 'Vienna Note', as accepted by Russia, be compared with the 'Vienna Note', as amended by the Porte, the subject in dispute is seen in its final form.) These differences, however important in theory, seem ludicrously small to have caused such a conflict. A *raison d'être* for the war had therefore to be discovered by those who were waging it. Some saw in the war merely a just chastisement of an overbearing Russia; some saw in it a valiant blow struck in defence of oppressed nationalities; some consoled themselves with the assurance that war was necessary to preserve the balance of power; without stopping to consider very deeply the meaning, or lack of meaning, of this convenient *cliché*. But, before the expedition to the Crimea had even started, the statesmen of Britain and France found it necessary to define their war aims somewhat more clearly. The reason for this unwelcome circumscription, which would have the effect of depriving them of their complete

¹ Reprinted from *The English Historical Review*, January 1937.

freedom of action, was that the Western Powers professed to be fighting the battle of Europe. They were anxious to found an anti-Russian 'Concert of Europe', in the same way that an anti-French 'Concert of Europe' had been founded at the end of the Napoleonic wars. In particular, they desired to secure the co-operation of Austria, which had interests opposed to Russia in the Balkans. Austria, however, insisted on a definition of war aims: she wanted to be sure that she was to co-operate in an old-fashioned war for the balance of power, not a new-fangled war for *les idées napoléoniennes*. This led, after much complicated diplomacy, to the exchange of notes of 8 August 1854 between Austria, Britain, and France, by which the famous 'Four Points' were laid down. The third and most important point declared that

the three Powers are . . . of opinion that the relations of the Sublime Porte with the Imperial Court of Russia cannot be re-established on solid and durable bases . . . if the Treaty of the 13th July, 1841, [Straits Convention] be not revised in concert by all the High Contracting Powers in the interest of the balance of power in Europe.

No negotiation was to take place with Russia save on these points. France and Britain took care to reserve the right to demand further guarantees, if circumstances should render this necessary; but, unless the four points were entirely meaningless, these further guarantees could result only from an interpretation of them, and could not be entirely new. Austria admitted that there might be a few minor demands in the Baltic and in Asia; but she had every right to consider the four points as a real 'crystallization' of the allied demands in the Near East.

Russia was not anxious to see Austria join the Western Powers. She therefore decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and evacuated the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, which were immediately occupied by Austrian troops. France and Britain were furious at finding that Austria had escaped them. While Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman were fought, and the siege of Sebastopol begun

the four points remained in a state of suspended animation. Russia rejected them with contempt, and no one knew whether or not they could be considered valid. Buol, the Austrian foreign minister, was afraid that war might become general, and take a revolutionary turn. So on 22 October 1854 the Austrian army was put on a war footing, to put pressure on Russia to accept the four points. Characteristically, this step had been delayed until the season was too far advanced for an effective campaign. The campaign was intended to be a diplomatic one: and it achieved its first success within a month, for on 20 November news reached Vienna that Russia now agreed to the four points. Buol carried his campaign a step farther by bringing a highly complicated series of negotiations with Britain and France to a successful conclusion, and on 2 December a tripartite treaty was signed. This treaty was intended by Austria to put additional pressure on Russia to bring her to terms; and the fifth and most important article declared that if, by the end of the year, peace on the basis of the four points were not assured, the three allies would consult on 'les moyens les plus efficaces pour obtenir l'objet de leur alliance'. (France and Britain did not believe that Russia could intend to negotiate honestly, and imagined that this treaty would draw Austria out of her neutrality. Buol, on the other hand, saw no reason why peace should not result if all parties honestly accepted the four points. The next step was obviously to define and interpret the four points more clearly, for the exchange of notes of 8 August left them very vague, an unsuitable basis for negotiation. As Bismarck picturesquely declared on reading the treaty of 2 December: 'There is nothing very much new in it; but doubtless they have also come to some arrangement over the interpretation and specification of the four points, otherwise the pie would lack its filling.'¹ Bismarck's diagnosis was, as usual, correct. At the time of the signature of the treaty, the pie was singularly

¹ Bismarck to Gerlach, 15 December 1854: *Bismarcks Briefe an den General Leopold von Gerlach* (ed. Horst Kohl, Berlin, 1896), p. 179.

meatless: but for some weeks the filling had been in course of preparation, and at the end of the month the dish was duly served up for the Russians.

During the negotiations for the tripartite treaty, Buol declared that 'before taking up arms, the Austrian Government desire to know upon what conditions they may expect to be able to lay them down'.¹ On 13 November 1854 he wrote to Hübner, Austrian minister in Paris, that while Austria could not attempt to bind the Western Powers to precise conditions of peace, she must at least be assured that 'ces puissances n'ont pas l'intention de présenter des conditions de nature à la faire échouer dès l'abord, et à rendre l'acceptation impossible pour la partie adverse'. For example, there must be no question of territorial changes *dans la phase actuelle*, and Austria must be consulted if they should become necessary in the future.² Drouyn de Lhuys proposed to reply merely that the allied belligerents were prepared to negotiate on the four points, but reserved the right to add further conditions, a right already recognised by Austria. The British ministers were meanwhile wrestling with the same problem. Clarendon, the British Foreign Secretary, was much disturbed when he heard that Buol was demanding an elaboration of the four points. He feared that

there is some trick in this, and a hope lurking that we may require something exaggerated that will emancipate Austria from her engagements with us. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable, if she means to go to war, that she should desire to know how far and to what she pledges herself by joining us; but it will be difficult for us now to specify upon what precise terms we would consent to make peace.³

¹ Westmorland to Clarendon, 15 November 1854, no. 432; Public Record Office, Foreign Office, 7/437.

² 'Analyse des deux dépêches dont M. de Hübner m'a donné lecture le 17 Novembre, 1854', given by Drouyn de Lhuys (French foreign minister) to Cowley (British ambassador at Paris) and enclosed in Cowley to Clarendon, 20 November 1854, no. 1403; F.O. 27/1026.

³ Clarendon to Prince Albert, 19 November 1854: *Royal Archives, Muni-ment Room, Windsor Castle*, G. 19. I gratefully acknowledge the gracious permission of His Majesty the King to make use of unpublished material from the Royal Archives.

A cabinet meeting was held on 20 November to discuss possible terms of peace, and Aberdeen drew some small consolation from the fact that 'there is no intention of making such extravagant demands as the cession of the Crimea or Finland, or the reconstitution of Poland'.¹ On their constructive side, however, the French and British replies to Buol's questions were thoroughly unsatisfactory. General assurances of moderation could not be expected to satisfy the Austrians; particularly since Colloredo (Austrian minister in London) noted that, in defining the points, 'on voudra une grande liberté pour le troisième'.² Cowley saw the danger of this vagueness, and wrote to Clarendon:

I have pressed Drouyn hard on one point: namely, what he proposes doing if his answer is adopted and Austria turns round and says: 'This is all very well as far as it goes, but what you think moderate conditions I may think very immoderate,—you must explain yourselves a little further.' He swears that in that case he will direct Bourqueney to break off all further colloquy, and allow Austria to go her own way. She will have received a fair answer to all her questions, and she will have no right to ask for more. . . .³

Though the allied answer could not be regarded as a fair one, Buol found it convenient to be satisfied for the meantime, and he signed the treaty of 2 December. Beset with difficulties at home, he was in no position to fight a rear-guard action at the same time with his future allies. The interpretation of the four points, which might otherwise have been a major factor in the Austrian attitude towards the tripartite treaty, was settled later by a separate series of negotiations.

The British cabinet understood that the reply made to Austria was unsatisfactory, and at last seems to have become conscious that the allies did not know what they were fight-

¹ Aberdeen to the Queen, 21 November 1854: *Selections from the Correspondence of George, Earl of Aberdeen* (privately printed, 1885), vol. 1854-5, p. 280.

² Cipher report, Colloredo to Buol, 20 November 1854, no. 103 B: Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (cited henceforward as 'Vienna'), Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 40.

³ Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 20 November 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 19.

ing for. The Duke of Argyll had become conscious of it a month earlier, when he 'was a little alarmed by an incidental expression which fell from Palmerston . . ., implying that he considered the "Four Bases" as no better than an old Almanack'.¹ He therefore wrote a long letter for circulation in the cabinet, declaring that its members 'should come to some understanding more definite than exists at present as to what we ought to set before ourselves as the aim and object of this war'. He justly commented that 'to let things take their course in war means to let war feed upon and perpetuate itself'.² This statesmanlike letter was not circulated until 21 November, when the necessity for a closer definition of war aims was more clearly seen. It had a salutary effect, and both the French and British governments proceeded to develop their views further. Clarendon, closely modelling his words on a dispatch of Drouyn de Lhuys, proposed to define the third point as follows:

It is intended that Russia shall no longer hold exclusive dominion over the Black Sea, which shall be open to the ships of war of all nations in numbers hereafter to be regulated,—it is intended that the maritime preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea shall cease, that political and commercial agents shall there as elsewhere be established, and that the vast military and naval establishments of Russia, which can only be required for purposes of aggression, shall no longer endanger the existence of Turkey nor menace the peace of Europe.³

The proposed draft was considered by the cabinet on 30 November. The subject was so important—since 'the dispatch may have a binding effect'—that copies were ordered to be printed, and a decision postponed until the following day, when Palmerston would be present.⁴ On

¹ Argyll to Clarendon, 25 October 1854: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*. I am indebted to Professor Temperley for permission to make use of extracts from Clarendon's private papers.

² Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs* (2 vols. 1906), i. 489 ff.

³ Draft in Clarendon's hand, undated and unsigned: F.O. 96/24.

⁴ Clarendon to the Queen, 30 November 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20. Copy of the draft dispatch, 'printed for the use of the Foreign Office, November 30, 1854': *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

1 December the draft was substantially approved: but one or two alterations were made, apparently trivial,¹ in reality of first importance. One very significant phrase was omitted, namely: 'It is intended that Russia shall no longer hold exclusive dominion over the Black Sea, which shall be open to the ships of war of all nations in numbers hereafter to be regulated'. This wording would have established British adherence to the principle of the opening of the Straits, and would later have made it very difficult to reject the Austrian proposals for a system of 'counter-balance' in the Black Sea. The amended dispatch simply ran: 'It is intended that the maritime preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea shall cease', a statement which might be interpreted to mean almost anything.

The amended dispatch was sent to Westmorland, British minister in Vienna, on the evening of 2 December.² It is significant evidence of the dissensions in the British cabinet that, no sooner had the dispatch been decided, than Aberdeen took measures to ensure that it should not be literally interpreted in Vienna. Calling on Colloredo

Lord Aberdeen dit qu'il était nécessaire de donner développement aux quatre points, que cependant ils restent encore assez vagues pour donner de l'espace à la négociation; il désire qu'on s'arrête pas à la lettre exacte et précise de la dépêche mais qu'elle soit lue avec la pensée qu'elle n'a pas le but d'écarter la négociation.³

¹ Clarendon wrote to the Queen (2 December 1854) that 'some verbal amendments were made... and one or two short passages omitted'. The Queen replied (draft by Prince Albert, 2 December 1854) that she 'has read and approves the draft to Lord Westmorland as altered by the cabinet, which has not altered it essentially': *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

² Clarendon to the Queen, 2 December 1854 (*Royal Archives*, G. 20), says that he is going to send the dispatch away in the evening. A printed copy of the final dispatch, 'printed for the use of the Foreign Office, December 2, 1854', is in the *Royal Archives*, G. 20. In the F.O. records, however, the dispatch bears the date of 30 November. (Clarendon to Westmorland, 30 November 1854, no. 388: F.O. 7/430.)

³ Lettre particulière, Colloredo to Buol, 4 December 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 41.

When Westmorland read out the dispatch¹ Buol expressed approval: 'if Count Buol recommends negotiation, it is with a view to a glorious peace'.² A definition of the word 'glorious', however, as understood by Buol and as understood by the Maritime Powers, would have been almost as difficult to reconcile as the definitions of the third point. While the Western Powers were struggling with their definitions, Buol was engaged in impaling them on the other horn of the dilemma. The day after the signature of the tripartite treaty, he wrote to Colloredo that the Russian acceptance of the four points gave ground for negotiation; and since 'it is improbable that Russia wishes to open negotiations in order to gain time, Count Buol thinks no time should be lost in taking her at her word, if only to test her sincerity'.³ Clarendon thought that Russia's acceptance was a trick, and that Buol's overture 'will perhaps best be met by stating the amount of reduction of the Russian forces in the Black Sea that we should consider desirable for the safety of Europe'.⁴ The immediate British reaction was thus to make so strict a definition of the third point that negotiation would be impossible. Such a move would certainly have had the effect of alienating Austria. The majority of the British cabinet, which had never been favourable to the Austrian alliance, viewed this prospect with equanimity. The French government thought otherwise: the Austrian alliance must be maintained as long as possible, so that Austria and Russia might become more and more hostile. Drouyn de Lhuys therefore set to work to devise such an interpretation of the

¹ Westmorland was prevented by telegram (4 December 1854) from giving Buol a copy of the dispatch. This was probably owing to the attitude of Drouyn de Lhuys. On 11 December 1854, Westmorland was telegraphed the necessary authority.

² Westmorland to Clarendon, 6 December 1854, no. 458: F.O. 7/438.

³ Précis of a dispatch from Buol to Colloredo, dated 3 December 1854: communicated to Clarendon, 13 December 1854: F.O. 7/442.

⁴ Clarendon to the Queen, 7 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20. Clarendon wrote this on learning 'that Count Buol has communicated to the French government, through M. Hübner, the acceptance pure et simple of the bases, and enquires what the Western Powers mean to do upon it'.

four points that Austria would accept, but Russia refuse. When the signatories of 2 December should have agreed on this interpretation, in an exchange of notes,¹ 'Prince Gortschakov might be asked whether he accepted them as the basis of negotiation'.²

On 10 December Walewski (French minister in London) communicated to Clarendon a draft of the proposed identic note. The development of the third point ran:

La revision du traité du 13 Juillet 1841 doit avoir pour objet de rattacher plus complètement l'existence de l'Empire Ottoman à l'équilibre européen et de diminuer la prépotence maritime de la Russie dans la Mer Noire.³

Palmerston commented that 'we ought not to be parties to any communication which so completely shirks the main points at issue'; that no note was necessary, but that if one were decided on it must be 'full and frank' on the third point; and that 'the present moment is most inappropriate for negotiation with Russia'. Russell considered that 'the non-capture of Sebastopol [is] no reason for not asking for its destruction', and that this should be a *sine quâ non*; but he admitted 'that we cannot refuse Buol's proposal to name a plenipotentiary as soon as we are officially informed that Russia is prepared to do so'. Lansdowne agreed in these views, 'especially in the impossibility of concluding any satisfactory peace without Sebastopol is taken or destroyed, as with that the prestige of Russia's power in the East would go, without it would remain or revive'. Aberdeen could not hold out against this weight of opinion, and agreed that 'it seems quite essential to make the destruction of Sebastopol, and the diminution of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, a condition *sine quâ non* of peace'. But he argued that, since there was to be no armistice, 'there seems little practical

¹ France and Britain were to agree on a note, which would be presented for Austria's adhesion.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 8 December 1854, no. 1480: F.O. 27/1027.

³ Copy in *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

inconvenience in the proposed conference', and warned his colleagues that 'after the declarations made, and pledges given on this subject, we must be careful to act with good faith'.¹ Having received these opinions from his colleagues, Clarendon on 11 December told Walewski that the identic note was considered superfluous, the astonishing reason being given that 'Count Buol was fully in possession of the views of the English and French governments respecting the bases'. If Drouyn were insistent, however, the cabinet might agree, provided that the definition of the third point were strengthened.² Meanwhile, at Paris, Cowley on 12 December learnt the proposed terms of the identic note,³ and for a moment felt certain that France was playing a double game. He had for some days been suspicious that the Franco-Austrian *tête-à-tête* would result in the French lowering their demands.⁴ On the 12th, therefore, finding the French proposing what he considered an altogether inadequate interpretation of the third point, he determined to allow this process to go no farther. His interview on that day with Drouyn brought about decisions that vitally affected the diplomacy of the next few months.

When Cowley heard the terms of the French project of note, he protested against the vagueness of the third point. Drouyn de Lhuys defended his wording: the allies could not stipulate publicly for the destruction of Sebastopol, since they might not be able to take it. 'He was willing that this should be the understanding between the two governments, but not that it should be their declaration to the world at the

¹ Memo. by Palmerston: letter from Russell to Clarendon: memo. by Lansdowne: letter from Aberdeen to Clarendon: all dated 10 December 1854, in the MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

² Clarendon to Cowley, 15 December 1854, no. 1234: F.O. 27/1004 B.

³ 'Whether from design or accident I cannot say, probably a mixture of both.' (Cowley to Clarendon, 13 December 1854, no. 1498: F.O. 27/1027.)

⁴ As early as 4 December 1854 he had declared that France's growing intimacy with Austria might militate against good relations with Britain, and had urged that Britain should engage France in a confidential exchange of views on the meaning of the four points. (Cowley to Clarendon, 4 December, 1854, no. 1459: F.O. 27/1027.)

present moment.’¹ He added ‘that if we were to tell Austria now all that we meditate, it might frighten her, and make her desirous of backing out of her alliance with us’.² These arguments gave Cowley the opening he desired. He wrote:

Upon my asking Drouyn whether, in order that H.M.’s government might hereafter show that in engaging in negotiation they had not compromised the honour of the nation, he would have any objection to an exchange of notes, declaratory of the view of the two belligerents with respect to the Black Sea, he said he would sign them at any moment, and in as strong a sense as we pleased. This, I flatter myself, is a great point gained; because, if carried out, it will prevent France escaping us hereafter.³

Cowley at once wired to Clarendon to ‘avoid saying much to Walewski until you get to-morrow’s messenger’.³ The next scene of the drama was to take place in London. The British cabinet met on 13 December 1854. Russell and Lansdowne were of opinion ‘that if France will sign a strong precise note with us, we may send the weaker vague note proposed to Austria’.⁴ This view prevailed in the cabinet, ‘after much deliberation’, but some words in the proposed note to Austria were to be altered.⁵ ‘Diminuer’ was changed to ‘faire cesser’, and ‘maritime’ was omitted. The revised version thus ran:

La revision du traité du 13 Juillet 1841 doit avoir pour objet de rattacher plus complètement l’existence de l’Empire Ottoman à l’équilibre européen, et de faire cesser la prépotence de la Russie dans la Mer Noire.⁶

Much more striking was the note drawn up for exchange with France. It concluded:

England and France must therefore insist upon the demolition of Sebastopol, and if possible also of the other Russian fortresses on the

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, 13 December 1854, no. 1498: F.O. 27/1027.

² Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 12 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

³ Dispatched 1 p.m.: F.O. 27/1027.

⁴ Russell to Clarendon, 13 December 1854: *MSS. Clarendon Papers*.

⁵ Clarendon to the Queen, 14 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

⁶ Clarendon to Cowley, 15 December 1854, no. 1234: F.O. 27/1004 B.

Eastern coast of the Black Sea. Russia must be bound by treaty not to re-establish them, nor at any other point in the Black Sea to establish a great naval arsenal. Russia must not have more than four ships of war to be employed hereafter in the Black Sea. Other nations, including Turkey, must be limited to the same number, if the Porte consents to annul the Treaty of 1841. . . .¹

The policy that had been entered into was fundamentally dishonest, and the British ministers uneasily recognised it to be such.² Between themselves, France and Britain were to agree on a strict definition of the third point: whereas Austria, their ally of 2 December, was to be presented with a carefully bowdlerised version.

The British ministers embarked on this policy with reluctance; and Clarendon, somewhat unconstitutionally, said as much to the Queen.³ The Anglo-French notes were to be sent to Westmorland and Bourqueney, the allied ministers in Vienna, for communication to Buol if necessary; and the British ministers, by shifting the responsibility to Westmorland, somewhat salved their consciences. Moreover, Clarendon's language to the Austrian minister continually gave hints of the contents of the exchange of notes: as early as 16 December Colloredo wrote that 'aujourd'hui encore il me parlait avec vivacité de la nécessité de borner à 4 les vaisseaux russes dans la Mer Noire, nombre que les puissances maritimes seraient en droit y faire mouiller également'.⁴ The Austrians could not, however, be expected to

¹ As sent to Cowley, Embassy Archives, F.O. 146/526. (Enclosed in Clarendon to Cowley, no. 1234.) Draft of note in F.O. 27/1004 B. Copy by Cowley in F.O. 27/1027. Another copy in the *Royal Archives*, G. 21.

² See many statements by Aberdeen in January 1855, e.g. 'The attempt to entrap Austria into an assent, without letting her know what it is we mean, will not succeed, and would not be honest if it did'. (Aberdeen to Clarendon, 21 January 1855; *Aberdeen Correspondence*, 1854-5, pp. 322-3.)

³ 'It is with reluctance that Ld. C. has agreed to this course of proceeding. . . .' (Clarendon to the Queen, 14 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20.)

⁴ Lettre particulière: Colloredo to Buol, 16 December 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 41.

understand the significance of these words, especially since Aberdeen held very different language. Unlike Clarendon, Drouyn de Lhuys suffered from no qualms of conscience. He frankly defended the policy of giving Austria only a partial definition of the third point. 'Le cabinet de Vienne', he wrote, 'bien qu'il ait signé le traité du 2 Décembre, n'a pas encore acquis envers nous les droits tels que nous ayons à le mettre dans nos confidences et à lui faire part de ceux de nos projets qui se rattachent aux opérations de nos armées et de nos flottes.' Austria should be initiated into the ulterior plans of the allies only when she joined in the war, or showed definite signs of so doing.¹ When on 17 December Cowley read to Drouyn the note intended for exchange with France, 'he said that it coincided perfectly with his own views'.² Drouyn was especially insistent that the severe terms of the British note had been rivalled by himself in previous dispatches, and the major part of the note which he formally sent to Cowley on the 19th consisted of quotations from these dispatches. The essential point, however, is that the completest approbation was given to the British note.³ The Maritime Powers were now fully pledged to one another to continue the war until Sebastopol was destroyed, until Russia promised to erect no other naval arsenal in the Black Sea, and until Russia agreed by treaty to limit her fleet there to four ships of war.

The motive governing the policy of Napoleon and Drouyn was that France, in gaining Austria, must not lose Britain. Towards Austria Napoleon was as suave and moderate as

¹ Drouyn de Lhuys to Walewski, 12 December 1854: communicated by Walewski, 14 December 1854: F.O. 27/1040.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 17 December 1854, no. 1519: F.O. 27/1027.

³ The note was Drouyn de Lhuys to Cowley, 19 December 1854, enclosed in Cowley to Clarendon, 21 December 1854, no. 1541: F.O. 27/1028. The British government received with much satisfaction the French note, 'on the subject of the guarantees to be exacted by Great Britain and France from Russia with reference to the annihilation of Russian supremacy in the Black Sea'. (Clarendon to Cowley, 25 December 1854, no. 1287: F.O. 27/1004 B.)

Aberdeen: towards Britain he was as ambitious and intransigent as Palmerston. The policies of Austria and Britain were indeed so divergent that French duplicity was the only link that bound together these allies of 2 December. The French object was to 'cajole' Austria into the war, and unmask the full import of the allied war plans when it was too late for Austria to withdraw. As Clarendon ruefully noted, 'the French government appear to be bent on what they consider cajoling Austria, and not to bear in mind that Austria is quite as likely to cajole them'.¹ The British government therefore insisted on the Franco-British exchange of notes, to have an insurance against France's succumbing to the cajoling influences of Austria. The exchange was based upon mutual suspicion not upon mutual confidence. Cowley wrote that they 'will prevent France escaping us hereafter'.² And Thouvenel, in sending copies of the notes to Benedetti, proudly declared that the French note established a 'brevetd' invention' for this wide interpretation of the third point, and as such might if necessary be used against the British.³ By this transaction, therefore, Britain (thinly veiling her suspicions under a mask of courtesy) had secured a stick with which to beat France; and France had carefully obtained, in return, a stick with which to beat Britain. These dangerous and compromising notes were kept a carefully guarded secret, and only a few rumours found their way into diplomatic and political circles.⁴ So few hints were given that they

¹ Clarendon to the Queen, 14 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20.

² Copy: Cowley to Clarendon, 12 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 20. Drouyn declared 'that if ever Her Majesty's Government were summoned to explain their conduct, they might publish it to the world'. (Cowley to Clarendon, 13 December 1854, no. 1498: F.O. 27/1027.)

³ Thouvenel to Benedetti, 23 December 1854: Louis Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire du Second Empire* (1903), pp. 30-1. Thouvenel was the French 'political director', and Benedetti *chargé d'affaires* at Constantinople.

⁴ For example, the Turks knew that notes had been exchanged, though it is not clear how much they knew about them. (Westmorland to Clarendon, 28 February 1855, no. 84: F.O. 7/1452.) Malmesbury also learnt of the existence of these notes from a French source. (Malmesbury to Derby, 14 April 1855: Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an ex-Minister*.)

have entirely eluded the attention of historians of this period.¹

The allied belligerents now turned their attention to Austria, praying that Russian intransigence might deliver her into their hands. Their policy was to resist, even now, negotiation on the four points, and they therefore decided to make no move until Gortschakov petitioned for *pour-parlers* to begin. Their hope that Russia would refuse to take this step did not materialise. On 18 December Westmorland telegraphed to Clarendon that 'the Russian minister at this Court has stated to Count Buol that he has received from his government full powers to treat. Count Buol told him he awaits the decision of the Allies.'² This Russian move caused consternation at Paris. Cowley and Drouyn agreed that the best course now would be to refrain from communicating to Russia any interpretation of the four points: the duty of the ministers at Vienna would be 'merely to meet Prince Gortschakov for the purpose of refusing his propositions (which could never be acceptable to the Allies) without needlessly exposing our own'.³ Clarendon, however, absolutely refused to be drawn into such a policy, which he considered to be lacking in courage and good faith.⁴ The one hope of the 'war party', both in France and Britain, now was that Russia would refuse to accept the allied interpretation of the four points. 'I have no expectation,' wrote Aberdeen (who was among the most optimistic), 'that Gortschakov can admit the destruction of Russian "prépotence" in the Black Sea as a basis of negotiation; but it is barely

¹ This is true even of the Vicomte de Guichen's book, *La guerre de Crimée (1854-6) et l'attitude des puissances européennes* (Paris, Pedone, 1936), which purports to give an account of the diplomacy of this period from archive sources.

² Telegraphic dispatch, Westmorland to Clarendon, 18 December 1854: received 19 December 1854: F.O. 7/439.

³ Cowley to Clarendon, 24 December 1854, no. 1564: F.O. 27/1028.

⁴ Clarendon wrote to Aberdeen (25 December 1854) that 'it seems to me it would be neither politic nor honourable to enter upon negotiations or to break them off, without telling Russia what we really meant'. (*Aberdeen Correspondence*, 1854-5, p. 299.)

possible'.¹ Britain and France could never be persuaded that the Russian desire for peace was sincere; but plenty of evidence reached Buol that 'la prévision des dangers d'une coalition européenne contre la Russie augmente le désir de l'Empereur de terminer bientôt la guerre'.² Nesselrode, the Russian chancellor, feared, however, that the treaty of 2 December would not help the cause of peace, since 'les puissances maritimes appuieront sur cet acte pour augmenter leur prétensions, nommément par rapport à la révision du traité de 1841'.³ Later Valentin Esterhazy (Austrian minister at St. Petersburg) wrote even more definitely. In conversation with several distinguished Russians, he found that 'ils étaient tous d'accord sur la nécessité d'apporter aux conférences une grande sincérité. Je n'ai donc pas de doute à cet égard. L'Empereur désire et veut la paix.'⁴ Esterhazy had frequently reported the bellicose tendencies of the Czar and his entourage: these words are not the product of an over-optimistic pen. Buol had reason to assure the allies that he believed in the sincerity of Russia.

On 23 December Buol learnt the terms of the proposed identic note interpreting the four points. He agreed with the interpretation, but objected to the form of procedure, saying that it gave the appearance that the Maritime Powers had lost confidence in Austria. He would prefer the form of a

¹ Aberdeen to Clarendon, 26 December 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, 1854-5, pp. 299-300. Stockmar writes that 'Aberdeen used to say that, even if Russia were not honest, one ought to treat one's enemies as if they were honest'. (Stockmar, *Memoirs* [1872], ii. 476.)

² Cipher report, Esterhazy to Buol, 9 December 1854, no. 91 C: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 35. Esterhazy added that Nesselrode and Orlov believed peace possible 'si l'on n'exige point des conditions telles que: cession de territoire, destruction de Sébastopol, limitation du nombre de vaisseaux, frais de guerre, &c., &c'.

³ Telegraphic dispatch, Esterhazy to Buol, 15 December 1854: received morning of 17 December 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 35.

⁴ Lettre particulière, Esterhazy to Buol, 18 December 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 36. Esterhazy had spoken with Orlov, Meyendorff, and Brunnnow.

protocol.¹ Britain and France concurred, and on 25 December Clarendon informed Westmorland:

You are authorised to sign a protocol in which the terms of the proposed identic note shall be textually reproduced. You will take care that with respect to the third basis no variation whatever is admitted.²

On 28 December, therefore, Buol, Bourqueney, and Westmorland met at noon and signed a protocol in the terms of the old identic note: that one of the objects of negotiation should be to 'faire cesser la prépotence de la Russie dans la Mer Noire'.³ At 1 p.m. Gortschakov presented himself. For the first time since the outbreak of hostilities, the representatives of Britain and France, Austria and Russia, were sitting round the green table. On Gortschakov's entry, Bourqueney produced a memorandum in which were textually reproduced the terms of the protocol which had just been signed.⁴ Bourqueney read out this document; and Gortschakov then inquired whether the three courts were agreed on this interpretation. Buol, to whom the question was evidently addressed, replied that they were. 'J'ai saisi des passages que repousse la dignité de ma cour,' exclaimed Gortschakov. 'Nous n'en sommes point aux Fourches Caudines, et je crois parler encore au nom d'une grande puissance.' Gortschakov then read through the allied interpretation, and made suitable comments. On the third, he said:

Vous voulez mettre fin à notre prépondérance dans la Mer Noire: par quels moyens? Est-ce par l'engagement de démolir et de ne pas recon-

¹ Telegraphic dispatch, Westmorland to Clarendon, 23 December 1854: received 24 December 1854, 5.15 p.m.: F.O. 7/439.

² Telegraphic dispatch, Clarendon to Westmorland, 25 December 1854, no. 434: F.O. 7/430.

³ The protocol is annexed to Westmorland to Clarendon, 28 December 1854, no. 501: F.O. 7/439. The memorandum communicated to Gortschakov, with an identical interpretation of the four points, is also annexed. The latter is printed in the *Parliamentary Papers, Eastern Papers*, xiii.

⁴ The unofficial nature of this memorandum was constantly emphasised, lest it should appear that the first peace overtures had come from the Western Powers. But its unofficial character was later the cause of much difficulty.

struire nos forteresses? Eh bien, je vous réponds tout de suite que c'est six années de guerre, et nous les acceptons avec l'Europe.

The allied plenipotentiaries declared, however, that discussion was useless: they had not come to negotiate, but to discover whether negotiation was possible. Gortschakov rose, and Buol demanded whether this was to be taken as a Russian rejection. 'Je ne regrette (? rejette) pas les principes,' replied Gortschakov; 'je ne puis adhérer à leur développement: modifiez la rédaction.'¹ This was declared to be impossible. Gortschakov thereupon demanded a copy of the memorandum to send to his government: and he was accorded fifteen days to wait for an answer. He gave 'the assurance that even at an earlier period than the one which had been fixed upon, if possible, he would communicate to us the answer of his government'; and, as a parting shot, he called upon Buol 'to inform the Emperor of Austria that he, Prince Gortschakov, had objected to accede to a document which . . . he considered to be invested with a character offensive to his Sovereign'.² Both Bourqueney and Westmorland were of opinion that the reference to St. Petersburg was simply a 'délai de rupture'.³ The news of the conference caused great joy in London and in Paris. For it seemed that Russia's attitude would extricate them from all their diplomatic difficulties—from the dishonest and awkward position in which the two interpretations of the four points had put them—and at last draw Austria into the war. Clarendon telegraphed to Westmorland: 'Your dispatch of the 28th

¹ The above quotations are from Bourqueney's account, written to Drouyn de Lhuys on 28 December 1854, and printed in Bernard d'Harcourt, *Les quatre ministères de M. Drouyn de Lhuys* (1882), pp. 85-92.

² Westmorland to Clarendon, 28 December 1854, no. 501: F.O. 7/439.

³ Baron Jomini, in the *Diplomatic Study of the Crimean War from Russian Official Sources* (2 vols., 1882, published anonymously), greatly exaggerates when he asserts (ii. 184) that Bourqueney and Westmorland telegraphed home: 'Everything is refused.' Bourqueney's words were that, 'sur mes impressions de la journée, je crois pouvoir considérer la référence à St. Pétersbourg comme un simple délai de rupture'. (Telegraphic dispatch, Bourqueney to Drouyn de Lhuys, 28 December 1854, 8 p.m.: communicated by Walewski, 30 December 1854: F.O. 27/1040.)

has been received and has given much satisfaction. I hope Austria has announced to Russia that a rejection of the terms will be considered equivalent to a declaration of war.' ¹ This optimism did not last for more than twenty-four hours.

The object of Gortschakov's firm attitude on 28 December had been to find some opportunity of driving a wedge between Austria and the Western Powers: in this he had failed. On the other hand, from the allied side, 'the object of these demands was plain', writes Jomini, the Russian apologist. 'It was hoped to elicit from us an outburst of indignation, to saddle us with the odium of the war, and to drag Austria and Germany into it.' ² This object had also failed. Gortschakov and the Russian Government had fifteen days in which to mature new plans. Gortschakov's first move was to concoct a version of the four points and send it to Buol with a covering letter. He said that he had done his best to '*déferer aux observations que Sa Majesté l'Empereur a daigné faire en personne*', and reiterated that it would be useless to send the memorandum to St. Petersburg, where it would have the worst effect. On the third point, Gortschakov's modified acceptance ran:

Je ne refuse pas de m'entendre dans des conférences formelles de paix sur les moyens que les trois cours proposeraient pour mettre fin à ce qu'elles appellent la prépondérance de la Russie dans la Mer Noire; à condition que dans le choix de ces moyens il ne s'en trouve aucun qui puisse atteindre les droits de Souveraineté de Mon Auguste Maître.³

This letter somewhat embarrassed Buol, owing to its plentiful references to Francis Joseph. But Buol's sincere desire for peace is indisputable;⁴ and he jumped at this opportunity

¹ Telegraphic dispatch, Clarendon to Westmorland, 29 December 1854, no. 441: F.O. 7/430.

² Jomini, ii. 55.

³ Gortschakov to Buol, 29 December 1854, and enclosure: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 36. For a slightly modified version, communicated by Colloredo to Clarendon on 9 January 1855, see F.O. 7/468. This reads: '*les droits de souveraineté de Mon Auguste Maître chez lui.*'

⁴ For example, on 26 December 1854, two days before the conference, Buol had written to Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha: '*Nun bleibt zu erwarten*

of rescuing something from the fiasco of 28 December. He at once showed Gortschakov's letter and memorandum to Francis Joseph who found the latter 'propre à former le sujet d'une délibération commune'.¹ Buol told Bourqueney and Westmorland that he would send Gortschakov's memorandum to Paris and London, since 'he thinks that it would not be advisable to make the continuance of the war depend upon a *nuance* in words, if *facts* are obtained'. Bourqueney complained that this could be construed as contrary to the protocol of the 28th; but Buol denied this, and said his proposal 'was merely to submit a modified proposition of acceptation to the judgement of his allies'.² Gortschakov could not but draw a satisfactory conclusion from this: it was an invaluable symptom of a divergence between Austria and the Western Powers. When Buol wrote urgently: 'Sollicitez l'adhésion pure et simple aux quatre points, tout en réservant leur interprétation aux négociations à venir'.³ Gortschakov was not long in following his advice. Buol wrote, a little smugly, to Esterhazy that Gortschakov, 'à peine rentré de la réunion, s'est repenti de la voie qu'il avait suivie. . . .'⁴ But it is far more likely that, in these urgent days at the turn of the year, Gortschakov knew well what he was doing.

Gortschakov's activities came to a head on 2 January 1855, when he secured an interview with Francis Joseph. As

ob es uns gelingen wird den Weg zu Friedensunterhandlung anzubahnen, und ob *von allen Seiten* guter Wille zur Verständigung vorliegt. In Frankreich scheint mir die Politik des Friedens überwiegend: in England ist die augenblickliche Stimmung kriegerischer.' (Enclosed in Ernest II to Prince Albert, 1 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 21.) Clarendon, on reading this letter, commented: 'I think it has all the appearance of readiness to accept an unsafe and inglorious peace.' (Clarendon to Prince Albert, 6 January 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 21.)

¹ Gortschakov to Buol, 30 December 1854: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 36.

² Copy: Lady Westmorland to Clarendon, 29 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 21.

³ Buol to Gortschakov, 30 December 1854: Vienna Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 36.

⁴ Lettre particulière, Buol to Esterhazy, 2 January 1855: Vienna, Gesandtschaftsarchiv Russland, x. Fasc. 178.

Hübner had acutely noted a month earlier, 'distinguer entre l'Empereur et le comte Buol est la tactique russe'.¹ Gortschakov told Francis Joseph that the allied interpretation seemed in some way offensive to the dignity of Nicholas, and that a 'pure and simple' adhesion was therefore impossible. Francis Joseph reassured him, by saying that 'avant toute chose je vous prie d'être persuadé que jamais mon nom ne se trouvera attaché à une condition qui blesserait son honneur ou sa dignité'.² The language held by Buol was also reassuring.

'Certes,' he wrote to Esterhazy, 'nous ne nous croyons pas appelés à juger les motifs qui ont pu déterminer M. le Prince de Gortschakov à demander par exemple d'être rassuré que l'on ne chercherait pas à imposer à sa Cour des sacrifices tels que la démolition des fortifications de Sébastopol et la limitation du nombre de ses vaisseaux, moyens que n'implique pas, à notre avis, l'objet auquel se rapporte le troisième point et qui, nous n'hésitons pas à le déclarer, n'étaient jamais entrés dans nos calculs.'³

The utter incompatibility of this assurance to Russia,⁴ and the secret Anglo-French exchange of notes, is too striking to need emphasis. Further, Buol referred to Gortschakov's memorandum in terms of high approval.⁵ But he at the same time complained bitterly of 'le caractère de l'activité déployée en dernier lieu par le ministre de Russie, bien plus dans le but de nous séparer de l'alliance avec les puissances occi-

¹ Gortschakov had an interview with Francis Joseph on 3 December 1854, and 'il dit à tout le monde qu'il en est sorti satisfait'. (Hübner, *Neuf ans de souvenirs* [1905-8], i. 286.)

² Gortschakov to Nesselrode, 2 January 1855. Goryainov, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles* (1910), p. 98.

³ Buol to Esterhazy, 3 January 1855, no. 2: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 38.

⁴ Esterhazy was ordered to read this dispatch to Nesselrode.

⁵ Buol wrote that the Maritime Powers would have nothing to do with Gortschakov's memorandum, but 'quant à nous, nous sommes prêts à reconnaître toute la valeur de la démarche de M. le Plénipotentiaire de Russie, qui nous aurait paru propre à frayer la voie à une entente'. (Buol to Esterhazy, 3 January 1855, no. 3: Vienna, Gesandtschaftsarchiv Russland, x. Fasc. 178.)

dentales que de préparer les voies à une paix sincère'.¹ Whatever had been his methods, Gortschakov had achieved a result satisfactory to himself: and he urged Nesselrode to secure the continuance of the negotiations. Gortschakov's views are found expressed in a dispatch to Nesselrode of 3 January 1855. 'Il existe deux moyens,' he declared, 'de diminuer² la prépondérance d'un état: ou de l'affaiblir ou de fortifier la puissance qui en est menacée.' The first means could not be thought of, owing to

la ferme résolution de notre auguste maître et les déclarations positives que m'a faites l'empereur Franz Josef. . . . Quant à l'autre moyen, il est probable que les deux cours occidentales chercheront à obtenir sur territoire turc des établissements pour leurs vaisseaux de guerre. Nous ne pouvons pas nous y opposer. . . .³

It was with an *arrière pensée* of this sort that the Russian cabinet decided to accept the allied interpretation of 28 December. On 6 January, Gortschakov announced that he had received instructions from his government.⁴ The Russian answer had arrived nine days after the conference of 28 December; Gortschakov had been permitted fifteen days. This fact is of importance, quite apart from whether the Russian reply was an acceptance or a refusal: for it shows in itself that there was no Russian policy of delaying the march of negotiation, as is almost universally stated.⁵

¹ Buol to Esterhazy, 3 January 1855, no. 5, Secrète: Vienna, Pol. Arch. Russland, x. Fasc. 38.

² Gortschakov's use of the word 'diminuer' here is illegitimate. He should have written 'faire cesser'.

³ Gortschakov to Nesselrode, 3 January 1855: Goryainov, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, pp. 98-9. Even such an interpretation was no small concession on the part of Russia. Westmorland, writing six months earlier on the Black Sea question, declared that 'a regulation to have there as many ships as the others in the same sea could only be obtained next year, after great and successful fighting'. (Westmorland to Lady Westmorland, 29 June 1854: *The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland* [1909], p. 223.)

⁴ Telegraphic dispatch: Westmorland to Clarendon, 6 January 1855: received 7 January 1855: F.O. 7/451.

⁵ For example, Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe* (1891): vol. ii. cap. 4, section vi, is headed 'Tactique dilatoire de la Russie'. Many of the

Throughout, the Russian tactics were the reverse of dilatory. Their object was to demonstrate as quickly as possible, to Austria, Prussia, and the Bund, that the demands of the Western Powers were exorbitant.

On 7 January 1855 the four plenipotentiaries met in conference a second time. Gortschakov read his own memorandum, claiming that there was no essential difference between his version and that of the allies.¹ But the others answered that they recognised no interpretation but their own, and had assembled to receive the Russian assent or refusal.² Gortschakov thereupon gave his assent, and

with reference to the third basis, he said that he did not refuse to recognise the principle of seeking as a European object to put an end to the preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea, and he admitted that it might be an object for the allies of Turkey to desire; he would therefore adopt the proposal to enter into negotiation upon the principle which was put forward.

Veiling his chagrin under a spiteful reference to 'the allies of Turkey', the Russian minister had thus fully assented to the principle that Russian supremacy in the Black Sea must be abolished. Then,

he announced that he had his full powers to enter at once into this negotiation, and without unduly pressing the request expressed his anxious desire that we would seek to obtain at an early date from our

details of this section are wrong, e.g. Gortschakov's memorandum of 29 December 1854 is dated 7 January 1855, and the transactions of January 1855 are entirely misinterpreted. See also F. A. Simpson, *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France* (2nd ed. 1930), p. 303: 'the success of Gortschakov's dilatory manoeuvres at Vienna'.

¹ Bourqueney to Drouyn de Lhuys, 7 January 1855; Bernard d'Harcourt, p. 95.

² There is no doubt that Gortschakov's interpretation was set aside: but Buol did not make this quite clear in a dispatch to Hübner, which gave rise to rumours among the German states that Russia had agreed only to her own interpretation (Bernard d'Harcourt, pp. 97-9). Britain and France later tried to use this discrepancy to throw discredit on Gortschakov's acceptance of the allied terms. But since Bourqueney's and Westmorland's accounts tally, and Buol admitted that his own account was a *précis* rather than a *procès-verbal*, there is no doubt about what actually occurred on 7 January 1855.

governments the full powers for ourselves, and from the government of the Porte for the Turkish negotiator.¹

Far from seeking excuses for delay, Gortschakov was thus displaying anxiety to begin the negotiation as soon as possible. The conference of 7 January now broke up. No protocol was made: so that Gortschakov, though his full assent to the allied interpretation had been given, had put hand to no document. This irregular mode of proceeding later caused some discredit to fall on the transactions of the conference; but for the present it was enough that Russian assent had been given, even if the form of assent was technically defective.

The news that Russia had accepted the allied interpretation caused consternation at the Quai d'Orsay. Thouvenel was clear-sighted enough to recognise at once the absurdity of the allied position; 'demander au Prince Menchikoff de nous *rendre* Sébastopol, c'est, passez-moi le mot, une mauvaise plaisanterie!' ² It caused still greater consternation in Downing Street. Aberdeen commented that, whether Nicholas were sincere or not,

his late acceptance of the four points was a most disastrous proceeding. It must paralyse Austria until his sincerity shall have been brought to the test of negotiation; and, as the allies have fixed their own terms of negotiation, it cannot now be well avoided, if the Emperor should really wish to bring the matter to this issue.³

Since Aberdeen, who was personally not unfavourable to negotiation, was writing in this tone, the disgust of the 'war party' may be readily imagined. It was generally felt that there was a danger of ignominious terms being accepted. The *Daily News* commented (9 January) that 'the present is, perhaps, the most anxious crisis through which we have had to pass since the commencement of the war; for never before

¹ Westmorland to Clarendon, 8 January 1855, no. 10: F.O. 7/451.

² Thouvenel to Benedetti, 9 January 1855: Louis Thouvenel, p. 32.

³ Aberdeen to the Queen, 11 January 1855: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, 1854-55, p. 373.

have we appeared to be drifting so close to the shoals of national dishonour'. The minds of some, indeed, turned to the possibility of an armistice; but it was not through the likelihood of Britain demanding inadequate terms that she was 'drifting so close to the shoals of national dishonour'. The phrase of the *Daily News* was nearer the truth than it knew; for the events of the previous month had manoeuvred Britain and France into a thoroughly dishonest diplomatic position. It was with reason that Granville told Greville 'that the course of Russia had been more straightforward than that of England and France, . . . and added that we were in a great diplomatic mess, France always finessing and playing a game of her own'.¹ Time and time again the Western Powers had hoped that Russian intransigence would render inoperative their moderate statements to Austria; and, time and time again, they had been baulked by Russian concessions, which they labelled Russian duplicity. France and Britain therefore found themselves bound to negotiate with Russia on the basis of the protocol of 28 December; whereas their real terms—withheld even from their ally, Austria—were incorporated in the notes exchanged on 17-19 December. The French attempt to cajole Austria had failed: far from involving Austria in war, the allies were merely involving themselves in double-dealing. Strenuous efforts were still made by France and Britain to avoid serious negotiation; but their efforts were useless, and conferences opened in Vienna in March 1855.² With such a background it is surprising, not that the conferences failed, but that they so nearly succeeded.

¹ 20 January 1855: *The Greville Memoirs, a Journal of the reign of . . . Queen Victoria* (8 vols., 1896), vii. 229.

² For the Vienna Conferences see pages 33-67, 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell'.

THE PACIFISTS OF THE FIFTIES¹

By the eighteen-fifties the peace movement in the United States, Britain, and France had ceased to be the province of religious enthusiasts and political cranks and had become a movement which exercised considerable influence upon political events. It left its mark not merely in the columns of the press but also upon the minds of statesmen. It is proposed to examine briefly the main outlines of the British side of this peace movement; but no exhaustive treatment has been attempted. Attention is drawn to some new material. But the main object of this essay is to show the relationship between events which, though well-known, have not hitherto been associated, and to put into their European contexts certain movements and trends of thought which have so far been treated in a somewhat isolated fashion.

The early peace plans of Henry IV and Sully, of William Penn and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, of Rousseau and Kant, created a certain stir in their day and have been quoted respectfully ever since. But they led to no peace movement and cannot be said to have materially aided the cause of peace. It was the war-weariness of 1815 that first turned men's thoughts seriously to the problem of how to avoid war in the future. To the mystical mind of Czar Alexander, a religious solution presented itself. The monarchs of Europe were to enter into a brotherly bond; and 'in order to assure to this bond the solidarity which the grandeur and the purity of the aim to which it tends imperiously demands, we have thought it should be founded on the sacred principles of the Christian religion'.² The more practical minds of Metter-

¹ Reprinted from "The Pacifists of the Fifties": *The Journal of Modern History*, September 1937.

² The sovereigns of Austria, Prussia, and Russia to the prince regent of Great Britain, Paris, 26 September 1815: E. Hertslet, *Map of Europe by Treaty* (4 vols., London, 1875-91), i. 319.

nich and Castlereagh suggested a more practical solution. Representatives of the victorious powers were to meet at fixed periods, 'for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests, and for the consideration of the measures which at each of those periods shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of Nations, and for the maintenance of the Peace of Europe'.¹ Thus was launched the first great experiment in international government.

Princes and potentates were sincerely preoccupied with the necessity of founding a régime of peace. No less interested were humble citizens and subjects. The first peace society in the world was founded by David Low Dodge, in New York, on 14 August 1815. By the close of 1815 three such societies had been founded in the United States. In 1816—also independently—William Allen founded the British Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Perpetual Peace. In its origin the British movement was entirely Quaker, and it was predominantly so in America. Dodge and Allen are not names to conjure with, like Rousseau or Kant; these humble and godly men will not be remembered for profundity of intellect or brilliance of expression. But they lit a candle which even to-day has not been put out.

The early apostles of peace had more in common with the mysticism of the Holy Alliance than with the practical diplomacy of the Quadruple Alliance. The basis of the British Peace Society was the proposition that 'all war, whether offensive or defensive, is upon Christian principles utterly indefensible'. To turn the other cheek is never popular, and is always open to the jibe of cowardice. It is not surprising, therefore, that a body professing these principles did not make rapid headway. Nevertheless, the Society showed great energy; and by means of tracts and lectures, branches were founded during its first twenty years in most of the larger towns of Britain. Cordial relations were maintained with the American Peace Society. In 1841 the Quaker

¹ Article VI, Treaty of alliance and friendship between Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, 20 November, 1815, *ibid.*, i. 375.

Joseph Sturge visited the United States, principally in connection with the anti-slavery movement; and on 29 July he met most of the active members of the American Peace Society at Boston. A project for an international peace conference in London was discussed. Moreover, it was resolved

that the suggestion of Judge Jay, of the insertion of a clause in all conventional treaties between nations, mutually binding the parties to submit all international disputes, during the continuance of such treaties, to the arbitration of some one or more friendly powers, presents a definite and practicable object of effort worthy of the serious attention of the friends of peace.¹

This is highly significant, as a crystallisation of the immediate aims of the Society, for no popular movement could be founded merely on the principle, however, laudable, that all war is un-Christian and immoral. If the movement had not become more practical, on such lines, Cobden and Bright would never have been able to co-operate with it, and it would never have risen to significance.

The first international peace convention, for which Sturge had been working since 1841, met in London, on 22-24 June 1843. Of the 324 delegates, 26 were from America, and only 6 from the continent. The atmosphere of the meetings was throughout very religious. The sittings were opened each day with prayer; and several resolutions, condemning even defensive warfare as un-Christian, were passed. But the more practical side appeared in the adoption of Jay's principle of arbitration. Small notice was taken of the conference in the newspapers or elsewhere, and this first 'international' effort proved rather a flash in the pan. Other movements were of more immediate interest: reform of the franchise and of prisons, anti-slavery and the Anti-Corn Law League. All these causes were linked in the temperament of the humanitarian evangelical, of the Quaker, and of the Manchester man.

¹ Henry Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge* (London, 1864), pp. 351-2.

Richard Cobden, in preaching free trade, never regarded that principle as an end in itself:

I believe that the physical gain will be the smallest gain to humanity from the success of this principle. I look further: I see in the free-trade principle that which shall act on the moral world as the principle of gravitation in the universe—drawing men together, thrusting aside the antagonism of race, and creed, and language, and uniting us in the bonds of eternal peace. I have looked even further; I have speculated, —perhaps I ought to say dreamt—on what the effect of the triumphs of this principle may be in the dim future,—aye, a thousand years hence. I believe that the desire and the motive for large and mighty empires, for gigantic armies and great navies, for those materials that are used for the destruction of life, and the desolation of the rewards of labour, will die away.¹

Cobden and his friend Bright were never advocates of the principle of complete non-resistance, but there were sufficient elements of concord to enable them to work harmoniously with the Peace Society, once the Corn Law battle had been won.

On 23 May 1848, Henry Richard became secretary of the Peace Society, and he held that office until his death almost forty years later. His name, with those of Joseph Sturge, Richard Cobden, and John Bright, is indissolubly linked with the peace movement of this period.² The emergence of this new leader coincided with the resumption of the international peace conferences, which were to have been held annually after the 1843 convention. The summer of the year of Revolutions, when hopes were everywhere running high, was an opportune moment for organising a second peace demonstration. Elihu Burritt, the 'learned blacksmith' of Connecticut, took the lead in carrying peace propaganda into France and Germany. In August he crossed to Paris,

¹ Speech at Manchester, 15 January 1846.

² See Charles S. Miall, *Henry Richard, M.P.: a biography* (London, 1889). Richard was not a Quaker, as stated by Christina Phelps in *The Anglo-American Peace Movement in the mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1930), but a Congregationalist minister.

where the demonstration was to be held; but the recent revolution there made it an unsuitable environment. There was a hasty change of plan—Brussels, instead of Paris, was chosen—and on 20 September the peace congress opened. About three hundred delegates attended; but, though seven countries were represented, the complexion of the meetings was dominantly British. Proceedings here and in the subsequent conferences were similar to those of 1843. One resolution, however, struck a new and highly significant note—a recommendation that Britain and the United States should lead the world in disarmament.

The first serious disarmament project was not produced by the British government, however, but by Britain's hereditary enemy, France. Only a few months after the Brussels conference, Louis Napoleon made to Britain what has been described as 'the most drastic proposal for the limitation of naval armaments ever put forward by the head of any nation'. The British ambassador was told on 17 January 1849, that the French government would 'be prepared to make almost any reduction we might suggest, provided we were disposed to do so upon somewhat the same relative scale'. France was the only country with a fleet in any way comparable to Britain's; so the suggestion was by no means frivolous. Palmerston, however, answered that Britain's possessions were too far-flung to enable her to entertain such an idea, and the matter was dropped. Some time later Cobden wrote that, 'if the European governments were to meet together for the purpose of promoting a reduction of armaments, there is not one which would enter upon such a movement with less earnestness or sincerity than our own'.¹ Could he have known of the transactions of January 1849, these hard words would doubtless have been harder. In the meantime, however, Louis Napoleon showed his sincerity by proceeding in the direction of unilateral disarmament; and in spite of considerable opposition, he made large

¹ Cobden to Henry Richard, 12 October 1852: J. A. Hobson, *Richard Cobden: the International Man* (London, 1919), p. 91.

reductions in the naval and military budget of 1849.¹ How far, if at all, Napoleon was influenced in this by the peace movement must remain a matter for speculation. But it is surely more than a coincidence that the winter of 1848-9 was a period of unusually vigorous peace agitation. Louis Napoleon's principal motive for his overture was probably a desire to act with Britain; for he regarded the first Napoleon's hostility to Britain as the fundamental fault in his policy and the chief cause of his downfall. But the peace movement may at least have influenced the manner in which the overture was made, and the making of the overture in itself shows that the peace movement was working in an environment not too hostile to its objectives. Formal diplomacy and peace agitation, hitherto separate streams, here intermingle for the first time.

Arbitration, not disarmament, was at this time the principal practical demand of the workers for peace. In January 1849, F. Bouvet brought forward an arbitration motion in the chamber of deputies. It was lost, but a step forward had at least been taken. In the same month A. Tuck brought forward, in the American house of representatives, a motion for arbitration treaties or for a congress of nations. This also was lost.² In Britain the way was prepared for Cobden's arbitration motion (12 June 1849) by over a hundred petitions to parliament from well-attended meetings. Cobden was insistent that his scheme was eminently practical. 'My plan does not embrace the scheme of a congress of nations,' he wrote, 'or imply the belief in a millennium; or demand your homage to the principles of non-resistance.'³ His resolution prayed that the foreign secretary might be directed 'to enter into communication with foreign Powers, inviting them to concur in treaties binding the respective parties, in the event of any future misunderstanding which

¹ F. A. Simpson, *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France*, 1848-56 (2nd ed., London, 1930), pp. 40-1.

² Phelps, p. 207; A. C. F. Beales, *The History of Peace* (London, 1931), p. 77.

³ Hobson, p. 55.

cannot be arranged by amicable negotiation, to refer the matter in dispute to the decision of arbitrators.’¹ After a lively debate, Palmerston moved the previous question—‘avowedly framed’, as Cobden declared ‘to escape a direct negative of my motion’—and ultimately the arbitration principle received 79 votes, compared to 176 against.² Among the minority were the representatives of nearly all the larger constituencies, and the friends of peace were much encouraged. A week later Cobden wrote to his friend George Combe, that ‘next session I will repeat my proposition, and I will also bring the House to a decision upon another and kindred motion, for negotiating with foreign countries for stopping any further increase of armaments, and if possible for agreeing to a gradual disarmament’.³ From this date onward, in fact, motions for arbitration and disarmament were continually put forward. In the meantime, great enthusiasm was shown as a result of the motion of 12 June 1849; the number of petitions in its favour reached 1,000, and the Peace Society started a £5,000 fund, which was soon subscribed.

Arrangements were now being made for the third international conference, which sat in Paris in August 1849. Again the British element was so predominant that it robbed the conference of its international character. Great Britain sent 670 delegates; the rest of the world, only 170. Victor Hugo presided over the meetings, and in an optimistic inaugural address looked forward to the day when cannon would be relegated to museums. Tocqueville entertained the delegates at the ministry of foreign affairs. Cobden, though not a member of the Peace Society, attended and spoke. In Charles Sumner’s words:

The Congress adopted, with entire unanimity, a series of resolutions, asserting the duty of Governments to submit all differences between them to arbitrators; also asserting the necessity of a general and simultaneous disarming, not only as a means of reducing the expendi-

¹ W. H. Dawson, *Richard Cobden and Foreign Policy* (London, 1926), p. 135.

² Miall, pp. 36-7.

³ Dawson, p. 138.

ture absorbed by armies and navies, but also of removing a permanent cause of disquietude and irritation. The Congress condemned all loans and taxes for wars of ambition or conquest. It earnestly recommended the friends of peace to prepare public opinion, in their respective countries, for the formation of a Congress of Nations, to revise the existing International Law and to constitute a High Tribunal for the decision of controversies among nations.¹

This shows how far the movement had changed since the days when it had merely made the dogmatic assertion that war was un-Christian, and had argued only from this high moral plane. The religious viewpoint of the Peace Society remained the same. Much later, Henry Richard declared:

I believe it is incontestable that many of the Early Christians, fresh from personal communion with the immediate successors of the apostles, fell into what many regard as the error of the Society of Friends, and other modern fanatics, of whom I am one, and maintained the unlawfulness of all war to Christians.²

Cobden and Bright did not adhere fully to the doctrine of non-resistance—Cobden, for example, thought that the Magyars were not unjustified in fighting the Austrians and the Russians in 1849.³ Cobden was always conscious that

in this Peace Conference movement, we have not the same clear and definable principle on which to take our stand that we had in our League agitation. There are in our ranks those who oppose all war, even in self-defence; . . . and there are those who for politico-economical and financial considerations are not only the advocates of peace, but also of a diminution of our costly peace establishments. Among the latter class I confess I rank myself.⁴

John Bright declared that 'I have not opposed any war on the ground that all war is unlawful and immoral'.⁵ and de-

¹ Hobson, p. 57. Sturge moved the omission of the words 'of ambition or conquest', but was outvoted. Beales, pp. 79-80.

² Henry Richard, *On the application of Christianity to politics: an address from the chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, at its annual autumnal meeting, held in Leicester, October 16th, 1877* (London, 1877).

³ Cobden to Richard, 9 November 1851: Hobson, p. 80.

⁴ Cobden to McLaren, 19 September 1853: *ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵ Bright to Thomas Rippon, 25 September 1882: H. J. Leech, *Public Letters of the Right Hon. John Bright* (2nd ed., London, 1895), p. 23.

fined his point of view perfectly when he wrote: 'I would advise you not to trouble yourself with the abstract question. The practical question is the one which presses, and when we have settled that, there will remain very little of the mischief to contend about or to get rid of.'¹ Cobden and Bright thus subordinated private religious convictions to the practical issues at stake, believing that the best way to succeed was by an appeal to the enlightened self-interest of the masses. But Cobden fully recognised how necessary to the cause were the devotees of non-resistance. 'The soul of the peace movement is the Quaker sentiment against all war,' he wrote in 1853. 'Without the stubborn zeal of the Friends, there would be no Peace Society and no Peace Conferences.'² In spite of a few minor differences, these varying types of pacifists and non-interventionists were, on the whole, able to co-operate harmoniously. In particular, as has been seen, Cobden was able to indoctrinate the movement with some of his practical spirit. The Peace Society, in complimenting him on his arbitration resolution, commended his wisdom in confronting the house with practical arguments rather than with abstract principles.³ No detail was too trivial for Cobden; no argument was neglected. He wrote to Henry Richard, for example:

Have you ever thought of collecting some facts showing the demoralising influence of the barracks in our large towns—the depreciation of the value of property or rather the check to the increase in its value as compared with other parts of the town, their interference with the convenience of the towns by preventing females of respectability and families from taking promenade exercise in the direction of the barracks,—the number of beer-shops and brothels in their neigh-

¹ Bright to Alexander H. Urquhart, 18 August 1879: Leech, p. 25.

² Stephen Hobhouse, *Joseph Sturge: his Life and Work* (London, 1919), pp. 127-8.

³ Phelps, p. 158. Though the attitude of Cobden and Bright to arbitration and disarmament commended itself to many thinking men, it militated against their being invited to join any Whig or coalition cabinet. See Russell to Graham, 19 July 1852: C. S. Parker, *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham* (2 vols., London, 1907), ii. 166.

bourhood, the number of cases in which young women are debauched and become charged to the parish with illegitimate children, etc.? ¹

The horrors of war might not weigh heavily on the individual conscience; the national debt might not seem to weigh heavily on the individual purse; let the advocates of peace, therefore, raise the image of seduced servant girls and pauper infants to point the moral and adorn the tale.

During 1849 there was war in Baden and Schleswig-Holstein, in Hungary and in Italy; but in spite of this, it was an 'annus mirabilis' for the cause of peace. Arbitration motions had been proposed in the legislatures of Britain and France and the United States. A notable conference had been held in Paris. Above all, unknown to the pacifists, Louis Napoleon had made a move in the direction of disarmament. The peace movement was fast becoming an issue—sometimes a subject for laughter, sometimes for earnest debate. The newspaper press frequently derided the peacemakers,² but it no longer entirely ignored them. The successors of Dodge and Allen were beginning to catch the ear of the public at last.

Cobden moved a resolution on the armament question on 8 March 1850; but the result was less successful than in 1849, for it was rejected by 272 votes to 59.³ The year 1850 saw the Don Pacifico incident and a French invasion panic. Palmerston established his position—as against Lord John Russell and as against the Queen—by his magnificent 'Civis Romanus sum' speech. This strongly entrenched the meddling interventionist policy, which was the basis of Palmerston's popularity, and it was a serious setback for the friends

¹ 18 April 1850: Hobson, p. 63; and cf. pp. 76-7.

² For a savage criticism of the Paris peace conference, see E. S. Caley, *The European Revolutions of 1848* (2 vols., London, 1856), i. 147. Footnote: 'An assembly of persons who appeared to be mainly intent on speaking bad French and making themselves generally ridiculous. It appears that their object is to abolish all war, but owing to their political predilections they would only abolish war when waged by sovereigns against rebels, and not when the case was reversed.'

³ Dawson, p. 138.

of peace and non-intervention.¹ Nevertheless, they did not abate their efforts; and the year 1850 was notable for the fourth international peace conference, held at Frankfurt in August. Henry Richard, who had in 1850 been forced by stress of other duties to resign his position at Marlborough Chapel, set out with Elihu Burritt on a proselytising journey through Germany before the meeting of the conference; but in spite of this, the British element still predominated, and there was a lack of German speakers. The conference was notable for its disarmament resolution:

That the standing armaments with which the Governments of Europe menace one another impose intolerable burdens, and inflict grievous moral and social evils, upon their respective communities: This Congress, therefore, cannot too earnestly call the attention of Governments to the necessity of entering upon a system of international disarmament without prejudice to such measures as may be considered necessary for the maintenance of the security of the citizens and of the internal tranquility of each State.²

This form of words, which was not passed without heated debate,³ was on the whole a victory for the non-interventionist element over those who believed in non-resistance, but it did not lead to open war among the apostles of peace.

A remarkable incident occurred on the last day of the conference. The duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were at that time fighting with Denmark and receiving spasmodic private help from the German states. Dr. Bodenstedt of Berlin, a well-known writer and liberal politician, appeared with a memorial signed by the leading members of the constitutional party in Frankfurt, as well as by the Schleswig-Holstein ambassador, requesting the conference to inquire into the questions at issue between Denmark and the duchies. By a

¹ For Cobden's opinion of Palmerston see, for example, Justin McCarthy, *History of Our Own Times* (4 vols., London, 1882), ii. 62-3. For Bright's opinion, see R. A. J. Walling (ed.), *Diaries of John Bright* (London, 1930). 'Palmerston is a dangerous fellow, a mere adventurer and impostor, but clever and altogether unscrupulous,' 17 December 1853, p. 154; and cf. pp. 184 and 223.

² Miall, p. 79.

³ Beales, p. 81.

standing order of the conference, 'present political views' could not be discussed; so Bodenstein's earnest address was soon cut short. However, some of the listeners felt that the matter could not be allowed to drop. Joseph Sturge, Elihu Burritt, and Frederick Wheeler—without authority of any kind, save that they were lovers of peace—set out for the scene of conflict. They did not presume to set themselves up as arbitrators on complicated issues of which they knew little. Their object was to persuade the belligerents to submit their quarrel to impartial umpires chosen by themselves. They found much cordiality on both sides and achieved a limited measure of success; for each of the two governments appointed an unofficial negotiator to discuss the constitution of the proposed court of arbitration.¹ Ultimately the idea came to nothing, but the doubters of the peace party were at least impressed by the honourable reception which the informal envoys had received. 'You have done good work,' wrote Cobden to Sturge, 'Never mind the sneerers. . . There is a blessing not only for the peace-makers, but for all who attempt that holy office in earnestness and sincerity.'²

The opening in 1851 of the first International Exhibition provided a fortunate environment for the fifth international peace congress, held that year in London. The Exhibition was in itself regarded as a notable blow struck in the cause of peace. 'We are living at a period of most wonderful transition', declared Prince Albert, 'which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which, indeed, all history points—the *realisation of the unity of mankind*'.³ The opening ceremony on 1 May 1851 filled the Queen with even greater adoration for 'my beloved husband, the author of this "Peace Festival", which united the industry of all nations of the earth'.⁴ Certainly, there had been fears that the Exhibition would lead

¹ Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, p. 454.

² Hobhouse, p. 138.

³ Speech of Prince Albert at the Mansion House, 21 March 1850: Theodore Martin, *Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort* (5 vols., 2nd ed., London, 1876), ii. 247.

⁴ Queen Victoria's Diary, Martin, ii. 366.

to revolutions and intrigues,¹ and the scheme did not fail to find detractors. Among its denouncers was the famous eccentric of the House of Commons, Colonel Sibthorp. 'Take care of your wives and daughters,' he exclaimed, 'take care of your property and your lives.'² The success of the Exhibition, however, stilled most of the discordant voices, and the chorus of peace and good will grew steadily louder. Joseph Sturge took a house adjoining the Exhibition, and gave a series of receptions where peace, anti-slavery, temperance, and analogous topics were discussed. The fifth peace congress opened on 22 July, and some four thousand people crowded Exeter Hall for three days. Of the twelve hundred delegates, however, over a thousand were nominated from the British Isles. The notabilities of the gathering were the same as in former years, and the resolutions similar; but, for the first time, press comment both in Britain and on the continent was voluminous. The peace movement at last had caught the ear of the world.

In the autumn of 1851 Kossuth visited England and was hailed with enthusiasm by the people. 'This vagabond is treated as if he were the Deus Optimus Maximus,' grumbled Shaftesbury.³ Greville commented: 'As to Kossuth, we are great hero worshippers, and there is something romantic and imposing in the Hungarian War, which was pretty sure to take in people so profoundly ignorant as the British public. . . . It is vain to attempt to disabuse them.'⁴ Unfortunately for the popularity of the British Peace Society, it did, indeed, attempt to 'disabuse' the public—and, what was worse, on 'non-resistance' lines. Cobden himself thought that Kossuth

¹ See Meyendorff to Nesselrode, 21 March 1851: (Otto Hoetzsch ed.), *Peter von Meyendorff, Politischer und Privater Briefwechsel, 1826-63* (3 vols., Berlin and Leipzig, 1923), ii. 391: and also Georgiana Baroness Bloomfield, *Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life* (2 vols., 2nd ed., London, 1883), ii. 3-4.

² McCarthy, ii. 51.

³ Shaftesbury's diary, 29 October 1851: Edwin Hodder, *Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* (London, 1888), pp. 450-1.

⁴ A. H. Johnson, *Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve, 1836-65* (London, 1924), p. 203.

should be heartily welcomed; for the peace congresses were in favour of non-intervention, and Kossuth was a victim of Russian intervention.¹ Then, on 2 December 1851, occurred the French coup d'état, and Britain was thrown into a violent war-scare. The freedom-loving British, both working and middle classes, loved Kossuth as a brave warrior against tyranny; they hated and feared Louis Napoleon as the destroyer of a constitution and the founder of a despotism. The peace movement wilted during 1852 in an atmosphere of militia bills and increased armaments. Cobden wrote a very able pamphlet entitled *1793 and 1853, in Three Letters*, in which he aptly quoted a parliamentary speech by Lord Aberdeen, inveighing against the doctrine: '*Si vis pacem, para bellum.*'² It was a great success among his private friends and a considerable public, but it failed to allay the panic. Indeed, it was soon out of date; it was published in January 1853, and within a few months the public fury had fastened upon Russia, in connection with the Eastern question. France was soon an ally: Napoleon III, for whom no word had been bad enough, was now overwhelmed with praise.

As the details of Menshikov's mission to Constantinople became known, and as they became distorted, the public outcry against Russia grew louder. 'Public opinion' in 1853 meant something very different from what it had meant fifty years earlier. 'They have got a new name for this hybrid sentiment,' said the ambassador, in Disraeli's *Endymion*. 'They call it public opinion.' 'How very absurd!' said Zenobia: 'a mere nickname. As if there could be any opinion but that of the Sovereign and the two Houses of Parliament.' This hybrid sentiment was much more mobile than formerly—much quicker to respond to the now-powerful press, which at once led and followed it—much more rapid in influencing parliament and cabinet. 'An English Minister

¹ Hobson, pp. 78-80.

² *Political Writings of Richard Cobden, with an Introductory Essay by Sir Louis Mallet* (London, 1878), pp. 197-8.

must please the newspapers,' complained Aberdeen, Prime Minister in 1853 and 1854; 'and the newspapers are always bawling for interference. *They* are bullies, and they make the Government bully.'¹ The people and the press were convinced that the Turk, who had sheltered Kossuth in 1849, was a noble fellow; that the Russian, who was menacing Constantinople, was a cowardly bully.² The pacific Aberdeen and a dominantly pacific cabinet drifted slowly into war; and, if successful diplomacy was hardly possible in this atmosphere, successful peace propaganda was out of the question. All the high hopes of the Peace Society, of the international congresses, of the arbitration and disarmament motions, were utterly shattered. The men of peace had had their hour of popularity; now they were to undergo a very storm of obloquy and abuse.

Cobden and Bright, Sturge and Richard, threw themselves into the effort to moderate the war-fever. In 1853 two final peace conferences were held, at Manchester and Edinburgh.³ Pamphlets were published, meetings were held, letters were written to the press; but all in vain. 'Good Joseph Sturge's confidence is enviable,'⁴ wrote Richard in January 1853; but even his confidence was undermined in the end. When he was convinced that nothing would move the arrogant bellicosity of his countrymen, he decided on one last effort: a personal appeal to Czar Nicholas I. Sturge submitted the idea to the Quaker 'Meeting for Sufferings'; and on 17 January 1854 it was decided that Joseph Sturge, Robert Charleton, and Henry Pease should proceed to St. Petersburg to lay an address before the Czar. It is noteworthy that this last effort was undertaken not by the

¹ Senior's diary, 13 September 1856: M. C. M. Simpson, *Many Memories of Many People* (3rd ed., London, 1898), p. 253. Cf. Miall, p. 104.

² For a study of the public opinion of this period, see B. Kingsley Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston: a Study of Public Opinion in England before the Crimean War* (London, 1924).

³ In January and October, respectively; cf. Miall, p. 92, 99. The Edinburgh congress was the last of the series.

⁴ Hobhouse, p. 140.

Peace Society, not by any international peace congress, but by the Society of Friends, a body of Christian men known throughout the world for their purity of motive and freedom from national bias. This scheme was not in their eyes strange or fantastic. Sturge's friend Forster had, during the years 1849-51, personally submitted the Quaker anti-slavery memorial to at least nine European monarchs. Moreover, Alexander I, Nicholas' brother, had invited some Quakers to settle in Russia, and seems to have been much attracted to them. There was thus a faint hope that an appeal to Nicholas would weigh more with him than with most sovereigns. 'Thou canst have hardly less hope than I have of good from our mission,'¹ wrote Joseph Sturge to his brother on 19 January 1854; but he would at least never have to reproach himself that he had not done everything possible in the cause of peace. The next day the three Friends left for St. Petersburg.

On 10 February 1854, Nicholas received the deputation with every kindness and made an answer to the Quaker address:

I have great esteem for your country, and a sincere affection for your Queen, whom I admire not only as a Sovereign, but as a lady, a wife, and a mother. I have placed full confidence in her, and have acted towards her in a frank and friendly spirit. I felt it my duty to call her attention to future dangers, which I considered as likely, sooner or later, to arise in the East, in consequence of the existing state of things. What on my part was prudent foresight has been unfairly construed in your country into a designing policy, and an ambitious desire of conquest.²

This was not an unfair description of the Seymour conversations and the subsequent letters of Nicholas to Queen Victoria;³ but Nicholas carefully omitted to mention his occupa-

¹ Hobhouse, p. 143.

² Henry Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, p. 478.

³ Harold Temperley, *England and the Near East: the Crimea* (London, 1936), pp. 270-9; and article 'The Seymour Conversations, 1853', *History*, xviii (1933), 241-7, reprinted above pp. 1-14.

tion of the Principalities, a tactless exhibition of force which makes him partly responsible for the 'drift' into war. These matters of policy, though interesting to posterity, were of no interest to the Quakers, who declared in their address that 'it is not our business, nor do we presume to offer any opinion upon the question now at issue between the Imperial Government of Russia and that of any other country.' What interested them was the last few sentences of Nicholas' answer when he declared: 'I am anxious to avoid war by all possible means—I will not attack, and shall only act in self-defence; but I cannot be indifferent to what concerns the honour of my country.' When the Czar spoke of the honour of his country, there was evidently no further hope, though the deputation was much impressed with his courtesy and sincerity. Joseph Sturge was convinced that Russia was more or less guiltless, in comparison with his own country—a point of view with which Cobden could not agree.¹ After having interviewed Nicholas, the Quakers could do little more; and a few days later they sorrowfully turned their faces homeward.

The *Times* was at first not altogether unfriendly to the mission: 'We must not deny to the gentlemen engaged in this piece of enthusiastic folly the praise of sincerity.' But in a few days it changed its tone, and, followed by the rest of the press, had nothing but ridicule and invective for the messengers of peace. Kinglake followed this bad tradition, and affected to consider Peace Society and Quakers a major cause of war. 'Of all the impulsions which brought on the war of 1853,' he declared, 'there was hardly any one more effective than the fatal voice from this island, which invited the Russian assailant to take heart and cross the border, by causing him to imagine that he had nothing to fear from England.'² This was a pleasant doctrine, by which the war-like might enjoy the fine frenzy of their bellicosity, and nevertheless blame the pacifists for causing the war. It is

¹ Cobden to Richard, 9 March 1854: Hobson, p. 109.

² A. W. Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea* (6th ed., London, 1877), ii. v.

hardly necessary to say that modern research has found no confirmation for this astonishing theory.

Cobden, Bright, and a few others continued to labour in the cause of peace; and their dignified and unanswerable utterances, at a time when every man's hand was against them, have become classical.¹ Their object was not to harass the government—a motive which made Disraeli and his organ, the *Press*, alternately warlike and pacifist—but to secure peace. They blamed the government not for malice but for weakness, and frankly recognised that the public was more warlike than those in control of affairs. 'I am willing to incur any obloquy,' wrote Cobden, 'in telling the whole truth to the public as to the share they have had in this war, and it is better to face any neglect or hostility than to allow them to persuade themselves that anybody but themselves is responsible for the war.'² Bright's dignified words, when contrasted with the flippancy of Palmerston, more than once gained him the sympathy of the house. On 13 March 1854 he condemned the reckless language of Palmerston and Graham at a Reform Club dinner; and Macaulay, normally well disposed toward Palmerston, wrote: 'I heard Bright say everything that I thought; and I heard Palmerston and Graham expose themselves lamentably. Palmerston's want of temper, judgement and good breeding was almost incredible.'³ Indeed, though Bright was burnt in effigy in Manchester, he greatly increased his reputation in the House. He noted in his diary:

I have withstood the war-clamour, and am in a small minority apparently, but hope sometimes for better times. My position in the House not worse but better, notwithstanding my opposition to policy of Govt. and House. . . . Have met with many marks of respect and good feeling from men of all parties in the House, and have much

¹ See G. M. Trevelyan, *Life of John Bright* (London, 1913), chaps. x and xi.

² Cobden to Bright, October 1854: Hobson, p. 106.

³ G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (2nd ed., London, 1899), p. 608.

reason to be content with what has taken place there so far as I am personally concerned.¹

This speaks well for the temper of the House during the Crimean War; and indeed, throughout the struggle, Cobden and Bright were never without influence on those to whom reason meant something. Greville noted: 'I cannot read the remonstrances and warnings of Bright without going very much along with him';² and Croker admitted that he agreed with Bright's view of the war, 'though not on his peculiar reasoning.'³ Bright received a testimonial from a surprising source, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, who, on visiting Sevastopol soon after its fall, declared: 'John Bright is fully borne out by all this. If this is a sample of the effects of war, who would not be willing to join his peace party? It is more like the crater of a volcano than a ruined city.'⁴ The ruling classes had, during this war, a sense of deep responsibility—almost a sense of guilt; and this feeling, though not participated in by the public as a whole, was to have a considerable effect for a generation or more.

On 30 January 1855, the Aberdeen government resigned, having been defeated on Roebuck's motion for an inquiry into the condition of the army before Sevastopol. On 6 February, Palmerston was able to announce that he had formed a government—a reconstruction of the old cabinet,

¹ 9 August 1854: *Diaries of John Bright*, pp. 176-7.

² 2 April 1854: Charles C. F. Greville, *Journal of the Reigns of King George IV, King William IV, and Queen Victoria* (8 vols., London, 1896), vii. 151.

³ Croker to Sinclair, 25 November 1855: Louis J. Jennings (ed.), *The Croker Papers: the Correspondence and Diaries of the late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker* (3 vols., London, 1884), iii. 329.

⁴ J. H. Skene, *With Lord Stratford in the Crimean War* (London, 1883), p. 340. Historians have, on the whole, been less just to Cobden and Bright than their contemporaries. Professor H. C. F. Bell, *Lord Palmerston* (New York, 1936), ii. 135, writes of Bright in 1855: 'The great free-trader, infuriated at Palmerston's elevation to the Premiership, had become if possible more inveterate in his dislike, unrestrained in his abuse, and incorrigible in his misrepresentations than before.' It is a pity that an attempt to do justice to Palmerston should lead to such gross injustice being done to Bright.

save for the omission of Aberdeen, Newcastle, and Russell. Aberdeen's principal Peelite colleagues—Gladstone, Graham, and Sidney Herbert—entered Palmerston's government only under pressure. Gladstone in particular was convinced that Palmerston would not strive honestly for peace. But Palmerston gave guarantees on this subject which satisfied Aberdeen,¹ the Peelites entered the cabinet; and Lord John Russell set out for Vienna as plenipotentiary for the coming conferences, with every hope of securing peace. But Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, and Graham remained in the cabinet little over a fortnight. On 22 February they resigned, when the House refused to abandon Roebuck's committee. Hence, when Russell returned from Vienna with terms which he thought should bring about a peace, the more pacific element was no longer in the cabinet. Even so, on 3 May 1855, the issue of peace and war hung in the balance; and it appears that only the independent influence of Cowley (British ambassador in Paris) on Napoleon III prevented peace from being made at this date. The failure of the Vienna conferences was a great disappointment to Cobden and Bright, Sturge and Richard. It was also a great disappointment to Gladstone and some of his friends, who may now be said, in varying degrees, to have joined the peace party. The friends of peace may now be roughly divided into three groups: first, Sturge and Richard, who thought that all wars were un-Christian; second, Cobden and Bright, who thought that most wars—and especially this one—were obnoxious and unnecessary; third, Gladstone and some others, who thought the war just in its inception but who believed that the western powers should have made peace at Vienna in the spring of 1855, and had put themselves in the wrong by not doing so. The peace movement thus secured an addition to its strength at a moment of supreme importance. The failure of the peace party to end the Crimean War in the spring of

¹ For the effects of this change of government, see article 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, v. (1935), 62-3, reprinted above pp. 33-67.

1855 may indeed be regarded as a turning-point of the nineteenth century; for it resulted in a peace that made Russia a revisionist power, and is closely linked with the resumption of great-power warfare soon after.

Though the organised peace movement was now shattered and broken, its weapon of propaganda useless, its leaders without hope, in the House of Commons its influence was probably greater than ever before. The calmness and dignity of the utterances of Cobden and Bright had made a great impression; the adhesion of Gladstone and some of his friends gave the movement a new importance in British and in international politics. But varying views were held by the Peelites as to the course that should be pursued after the failure of the Vienna conferences.

Sidney Herbert pointed out that the doctrines of the Manchester school

are supposed to be so extravagant as to carry with them their own refutation, but if they are joined by a few powerful men, the Government must draw fresh support from the war party, must bid higher for them, and must excite and evoke the war spirit in the people to enable them to carry it on. We shall pledge them deeper and deeper.¹

He was therefore unwilling to support Milner Gibson's motion lamenting the failure of the Vienna negotiations. Gladstone disagreed with this opinion, and there was a temporary estrangement between the friends. In writing to Gladstone to compose this difference, Herbert again expressed his disapproval of the Manchester school:

For the purposes of peace these are the very men we ought to avoid. They are damaged on the subject of peace. They are held to prefer cotton to honour,—and so they do. Nobody will listen to Bright on the subject of peace. It is not that his advice is suspected, but it is known to be valueless, because he starts from a different point, and has different objects from his countrymen. On this subject he is not an Englishman. . . . It was our interest, as it appeared to me, if we are to advocate

¹ Sidney Herbert to Aberdeen, 17 May 1855: Lord Stanmore, *Sidney Herbert, Lord Herbert of Lea: a Memoir* (2 vols., London, 1906), i. 425.

peace, to keep clear of these men. We want an honourable peace. They want peace, honourable or not.¹

Gladstone, though prepared to resume friendly relations with Herbert, did not agree with his opinion about Cobden and Bright. He replied:

I do not altogether adopt your view of our relations to the Manchester men as regards the question of peace and war. They have certain rights of priority which we cannot wholly overlook. Is it not something that they concur in measures which express our opinions rather than theirs, and while that is the case are we not bound to recognise them as persons entitled to be consulted? ²

Gladstone definitely ranged himself with Bright and Cobden, in so far as they were working for the same immediate object.

Gladstone never regretted the position he now adopted; and a quarter of a century later, in an important conversation with Lord Hartington, 'he referred to and justified his conduct and that of his friends in 1855, after separating from the Government of Lord Palmerston'.³ He attacked the government so briskly that Prince Albert complained to Aberdeen about it⁴—a striking instance of the loyalty with

¹ Sidney Herbert to Gladstone, 27 May 1855: Stanmore, i. 430-1. Gibson's motion was postponed; and Bright was able to guess the reason for the Peelite attitude: 'The Peelites were either alarmed at the position they had taken with us, or did not like to seem to act under our leadership.' *Diaries of John Bright*, 21 May 1855, p. 197.

² Gladstone to Sidney Herbert, 30 May 1855: Stanmore, i. 434.

³ Memorandum docketed in 1893 by the Duke of Devonshire, 'Notes before Second Audience with the Queen' (1880): Bernard Holland, *Life of Spencer Compton, eighth Duke of Devonshire* (2 vols., London, 1911), i. 276-7.

⁴ See my article, 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell', *loc. cit.* Prince Albert's letter to Aberdeen was dated 3 June 1855. Cf. *Diaries of John Bright*, 7 June 1855, p. 198.

In the Royal Archives is preserved a secret report from Frankfurt, dated 20 October 1855. This declares: 'Je puis garantir personnellement que les partisans de la Russie n'ont plus qu'une espérance, et j'ai regret d'ajouter que cette espérance unique gît dans le parti de la paix en Angleterre. Ici, comme en Autriche, comme dans toute l'Allemagne, les Russes et leurs amis affectent d'être persuadés que ce parti de la paix gagne rapidement du terrain, et qu'il sera vainqueur au Parlement.' (I gratefully acknowledge the gracious permission of His Majesty the King to publish this extract from the Royal Archives.) It is, of course, difficult to assess the importance of a factor of this

which the court was supporting Palmerston, its ancient adversary. This drew Gladstone still farther away from Derby and Disraeli, and his co-operation with Bright and Cobden tended toward the foundation of the Liberal party. Gladstone's reputation was temporarily lowered—ultimately, like Bright's, enhanced. But this accession of strength to the peace party, too late, now that the opportunity of the Vienna conferences was lost, did not bring peace any nearer; indeed, as Herbert feared, it drove Palmerston to rely more upon the 'irreconcilable' war party, the men who hoped that war aims would be indefinitely expanded, and Poland and Finland, Italy and Hungary, freed from alien rule. The public outcry against the peace party grew steadily louder. The Poet Laureate felt constrained to twitter:

Last week came one to the county town
To preach our poor little army down,
And play the game of the despot kings,
Tho' the state has done it, and thrice as well:
This broad brim'd hawker of holy things,
Whose ear is stuf't with cotton, and rings
Even in dreams to the chink of pence. . . .

Many men of taste found this doggerel deplorable, and quarreled both with the manner and the matter of Tennyson's 'Maud'.¹ Gladstone was naturally among them, and complained of 'the strange and nearly frantic passages about war, which one can hardly tell whether he means to be taken for sense or ravings²'. But Tennyson had well estimated the

sort; but it is at least evident that the attacks of Gladstone and his friends on the government had the effect of encouraging the Russians.

¹ Tennyson's 'Maud' was published 28 July 1855. See review in the *Press*, 11 August 1855 (iii. 764-5). 'Taken at its best, it is a strain of puling, incoherent sentiment and disordered fantasy, such as might flit through the brain of a love-sick youth in the measles: the fever of typhus would conjure up more vivid images.'

² Gladstone to the Duchess of Sutherland, 30 August 1855, John Morley, *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (2 vols., London, 1905), i. 818. With characteristic generosity, Gladstone later thought his opinion might have been too harsh, and made a 'partial retraction' (25 November 1878), Morley, ii. 189.

taste and the feelings of the majority of his public, and by the autumn the warlike fury of the people had risen to such heights that even Cobden despaired. He wrote:

I am actually so amazed and disgusted and excited at the frenzy to which all classes—and especially those called middle and respectable,—have abandoned themselves, and I am so horrified at the impudent impiety with which they make God a witness and partaker of their devilish paroxysm, that I would rather say nothing about it. My only hope is in Louis Napoleon, his interests and necessities. . . . How does it illustrate the madness of our combative countrymen, when one can only turn with hope for peace to the coercion of a Bonaparte upon the deliberations of our cabinet! ¹

Cobden's hope in Napoleon—a strange ally for the British pacifists—was not unfounded, and his attitude brought about peace in the spring of 1856.

When the Congress was sitting at Paris, the more old-established friends of peace, hoping that some good might come out of evil, raised the arbitration question once more. A deputation, including some twenty members of Parliament, waited on Palmerston and urged upon the government 'the importance of proposing at the conferences then sitting, some system of international arbitration which may bring the great interests of nations within the cognisance of certain fixed rules of justice and right'.² Palmerston gave the deputation small encouragement; but Henry Richard thought that a further effort should be made, by representations to the plenipotentiaries at Paris. He approached several friends without success, for the peace party had been disheartened by events. But, when he went to Joseph Sturge, the veteran of the Schleswig-Holstein journey, of the last effort at St. Petersburg, Sturge did not fail him. 'Thou art right,' he said. 'If no one else will go with thee, I will.' They determined to go; and later Charles Hindley, a member of Parliament, agreed to accompany them. A memorial was drawn up and presented to the plenipotentiaries, with an earnest request

¹ Cobden to Henry Richard, 18 September 1855; Hobson, pp. 128-9.

² Henry Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, p. 494.

that it might be transmitted to their respective sovereigns.¹ They interviewed Clarendon,² who pointed out the difficulty of persuading governments to bind themselves to arbitration; but he added: 'I will do what I can.' After a three weeks' visit the deputation left Paris without very much hope that their efforts would bear fruit.

Clarendon, however, kept his promise that he would do what he could. He consulted Palmerston, who was in high good humour with the proceedings at Paris, and returned a favourable reply: 'Your Plan of voluntary or optional Mediation seems to me a very good one, and one that would give great satisfaction here, and might do good with a view to the Preservation of Peace in Europe.' Clarendon's project has not hitherto been published. It ran as follows:

The Representatives of the High Contracting Parties having now brought their labours to a happy termination cannot separate without performing an act of duty, which as it may tend to prevent the effusion of Blood and to prolong the blessings of Peace they humbly trust will be acceptable to the Almighty.

In order therefore to guard as far as possible against a renewal of war and the calamities which it entails, the said R.R. engage for the High Contracting Parties, their Heirs, and Successors, that neither of them will declare war against the other until the cause of difference which might lead to war has been submitted to the mediation of some Third Power to be mutually agreed upon between them, and that if there should be danger of war between one of High Contracting Powers and some other Power, not a party to this engagement, then that the High Contracting Powers shall use their best endeavours to induce that other Power to pursue the same course as they themselves have agreed to adopt.

Further the High Contracting Powers agree to address a Collective Note to all Governments inviting them to accede to this engagement.³

¹ Copies of this memorial doubtless exist in most European archives. I have seen a copy in the Vienna Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, preserved among papers relating to the Paris Congress. Henry Richard to Buol. enclosure, 10 April 1856, Pol. Arch. England, viii. Fasc. 46.

² For an account of the interview, see Miall, pp. 107-8.

³ I am indebted to Professor Temperley for permission to make use of extracts from Clarendon's private papers. These papers contain the draft of

Palmerston objected to the phrase 'they humbly trust will be acceptable to the Almighty', which he considered 'far too Exeter Hallish'. But, apart from this, he said the project 'would do very well'. Though this project would probably have been as empty of result as that ultimately adopted, it is important to find that both Clarendon and Palmerston were prepared to agree to an *engagement*, not a mere *expression of a desire*.

Clarendon at once approached Napoleon, but found him not very favourable to the scheme. 'The Emperor does not like any engagement with respect to mediation before war is declared,' he wrote; 'but He is willing that some resolution in favour of the proceeding should be recorded in a Protocol.' ¹ Nor did Walewski, the French foreign minister, show any enthusiasm. On 5 April he wrote to Clarendon:

Ainsi que je vous l'ai dit hier, si vous exprimez en conférence un vœu qui rapporte à l'adoption du principe de médiation, nous nous y associerons très volontiers et on pourrait si vous le désirez consigner un protocole à l'expression de ce vœu auquel, probablement, tout le monde ralliera.

L'Empereur regrette que Ses occupations ne Lui permettent pas d'accorder une audience particulière dans ce moment à M. Hindley, et aux personnes qui l'accompagnent.

Walewski was cynically convinced that everyone would rush to support a proposition which would look well but would have no practical importance, and he was willing to preside over a conference which would endorse such amiable sentiments. Apart from Clarendon, and perhaps, rather surprisingly, Palmerston, no one took the proposal very

the project in Clarendon's own hand, entitled: 'Draft of Convention relative to mediation,' and endorsed: 'Copy to Lord Palmerston, 1 April 1856.' The Clarendon MSS. also contain Palmerston's copy of the project; two relevant letters from Palmerston to Clarendon dated 3 April and 6 April; and Walewski's letter to Clarendon of 5 April.

¹ Clarendon to Palmerston, 6 April 1856: G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, viii (London, 1932), 205. This letter was brought to my notice by Mr. Temperley.

seriously. When the project was brought up, Clarendon noted: 'The discussion was conducted in a most friendly spirit, but the general feeling was that the Congress should confine itself to the expression of an opinion favourable to the principle of mediation, and not enter into any positive engagement upon the subject.'¹ In 1849 Napoleon had made a pacific proposal, disarmament, and had been thwarted by Palmerston. Now, in 1856, Palmerston was favourable to a pacific proposal, mediation, and it was Napoleon who was perverse. Napoleon's position had altered greatly in seven years; perhaps he already had his eye on Italy. Whatever the cause of his attitude, it resulted in an emasculated proposal being brought before the Congress.

On 14 April 1856, Clarendon pointed out² to the Congress that Article VII of the peace treaty recommended that in a case of difference between the Porte and one or more of the signatory powers, recourse should be had to the mediation of a friendly state before resorting to force. He hoped that 'this happy innovation might receive a more general application.' He proposed, therefore, to agree upon an arbitration resolution, 'without prejudice, however, to the independence of Governments.' Walewski (France) and Buol (Austria) accentuated the necessity of guaranteeing the independence of governments, and Manteuffel (Prussia) showed some enthusiasm for the scheme. Cavour (Sardinia) inquired 'whether the idea would extend to military interventions directed against *de facto* Governments'; whereupon Buol retorted, a little impolitely, that he did 'not allow that an intervention carried into effect in consequence of an agreement come to between the Five Great Powers, can become the object of remonstrances of a State of the second order.' This *contretemps* being composed, it was finally decided that:

¹ Draft, Clarendon to Palmerston, no. 110, 15 April 1856: Public Record Office MSS, Foreign Office 27/1169.

² Protocol No. 23, meeting of 14 April 1856: *British and Foreign State Papers* (London, 1865), xli. 133-6.

the Plenipotentiaries do not hesitate to express, in the name of their Governments, the wish that States between which any serious misunderstanding may arise, should before appealing to arms, have recourse, so far as circumstances might allow, to the good offices of a friendly Power.

This was a very guarded statement, but the enthusiasm of the friends of peace was understandable. For the last four years they had been subject to every sort of contumely and insult; now, at the eleventh hour, their principles seemed to be stated by that most dignified and authoritative of bodies, a European congress. The peace movement of the fifties was destroyed: there had been no international peace gathering since the year of the Great Exhibition. Even so, this 23rd Protocol was its greatest triumph.

An interesting contrast may be made between the 23rd Protocol of 1856 and Article VI of 1815 (see above, p. 124). The 1815 scheme was collective, assuming a system of common action—all at war or all at peace. The 1856 scheme was individualistic, assuming a system of 'partial wars' and neutrality. The one, in fact, interpreted the experience of the Napoleonic wars; the other, the experience of the Crimean War. Article VI broke down within ten years; the 23rd Protocol was appealed to only three times; the urge to war was still far stronger than the urge to peace. But at least there was a growing tendency to translate into treaties and protocols the reaction that customarily succeeds a war, and to translate it in a form harmonious with the experience of the time. This brought with it the hope that if the experience should be sufficiently devastating, the reaction sufficiently strong, some effective machinery for peace might at last be erected.

The pacifists were delighted with the results of the Paris Congress, but the mild triumph of an ambiguous protocol was a small thing when contrasted with the setback that peace ideas had received in the country as a whole. Gladstone thought that, 'from the time of the Crimean War, the temper of the British public became more susceptible, both

of offence and of panic, . . . excitement increased, but it was quarrelsome or alarmed excitement, while tranquil progress languished.¹ Excitement was not long in coming. Early in 1857 news reached Britain of the iniquitous proceedings of Sir John Bowring in China, and on 26 February Cobden moved for an inquiry into them. His motion was carried by sixteen votes, and Palmerston appealed to the country. Bowring had bombarded Canton, as a result of a quarrel in which he was clearly in the wrong, and he kept himself in the wrong in all subsequent proceedings. In spite of the experience of the previous few years, Cobden was confident that the electorate would see reason, and would support him in this question. 'I am sure there is no safer battle-ground than the Chinese business,' he wrote. 'Our opponents will try to escape the issue, but we must rub their noses in it.'² Palmerston did not try to escape the issue; instead, he fanned the country into a patriotic fury with ease, for there had been widespread disappointment that the Crimean War had not continued for a campaign or two longer. His victory was complete, and the friends of peace were everywhere defeated. 'Was there ever anything', wrote Macaulay, 'since the fall of the rebel angels, like the smash of the Anti-Corn Law League? How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer! I wish that Bright and Cobden had been returned.'³ The attitude of the members of Parliament showed how much the House had been impressed by the utterances of the peace party during the late war; the attitude of the electorate showed how small an impression peace propaganda had made on the country as a whole. Cobden commented that 'in the present general election the most warlike returns have come from the most popular constituencies, the least warlike from the most aristocratic counties.'⁴ This was bitter

¹ W. E. Gladstone, 'The History of 1852-60, and Greville's Latest Journals,' *English Historical Review*, ii. (1887), 294.

² Cobden to Graham, 16 March 1857: Parker, ii. 303.

³ G. O. Trevelyan, p. 652.

⁴ Cobden to Henry Richard, 13 April 1857: Hobson, p. 208.

knowledge, to a movement that had rested its hope on the education of a democracy.

In the sixties, both the old world and the new were torn by desolating wars. But the peace movement of the fifties had not been entirely without result. In the diplomacy of the succeeding years, schemes of arbitration, disarmament, and so on, appear more frequently. This was almost always merely 'une carte à jouer';¹ but, since hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, even this was a step in advance. More important, the experiences of the fifties had really indoctrinated a few leading statesmen with peace ideas. Perhaps the impression made on the mind of Gladstone was the most important practical result of this phase of the movement. But for Gladstone's handling of the disputes connected with the 'Alabama' case, there might have been war between Britain and the United States; but for Gladstone's handling of the Majuba quarrel, there might have been no war between Britain and the Boers in 1899. Disraeli sneered at 'that principle of peace at any price which a certain party in this country upholds';² Bismarck proved that blood and iron paid; but Gladstone at least gave the authority of a great name to the proposition that some higher morality should be imported into questions of war and peace.

¹ Österreichisches Aide-Mémoire über den Abrüstungsplan, ca 19 September 1868: Hermann Oncken, *Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons III von 1863 bis 1870 und der Ursprung des Krieges von 1870-1* (3 vols., Berlin and Leipzig, 1926), iii. 28.

² Disraeli in the House of Lords, speaking on the Afghan War, 1878: Bernard Holland, i. 232.

THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION OF 1854¹

I. THE FOUR POINTS

The period of the Crimean War saw the final breakdown of that peculiar European Concert established by the statesmen of 1815. There had for many years been symptoms that the system then established was disintegrating; but it had achieved some notable successes. During 1840 and 1841, for example, the Straits question was settled without serious conflict. The system of 1815, in fact, seemed to work best when performing its original function, that of holding France in check. This 'system of the Emperor Nicholas, to which Europe was indebted for thirty years of peace',² was not exactly a European Concert. It was in essence a permanent alliance between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, based on a community of political interests—monarchy as against liberalism—rather than on common interests in foreign affairs. All these powers were interested in maintaining the *status quo*,³ however, and were in general opposed not only to revolution but to any ambitious foreign policy. Three powers out of five, united in such a cause, were a constant guarantee against disturbances of the peace. There was at least an embryonic Concert of Europe.

This co-operation of the three eastern powers, to which

¹ Reprinted from "The Diplomatic Revolution of 1854": *American Historical Review*, October 1937.

² Saburov's report of the conference of 24 Jan. 1880, J. Y. Simpson, *The Saburov Memoirs* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 120. The words quoted are Bismarck's.

³ This was true, after 1828-9, even of Russian policy towards Turkey. See Memoranda of Daschkov and Nesselrode, F. F. Martens, *Recueil de traités et conventions conclus par la Russie avec les puissances étrangères* (St. Petersburg, 1878), iv,¹ 438-9. Though Turkey was to be maintained, she was not to be allowed to strengthen herself; see C. W. Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 124.

the name 'Holy Alliance' still clung, perhaps reached its height in 1849, when Russia intervened to help the Habsburg monarchy to put down the Hungarian rebels, and when Palmerston declined to support them. At Olmütz, in the following year, the predominance of Russia was too plainly demonstrated to the whole of Europe. Many Austrian statesmen felt that, in spite of the inestimable services rendered by Russia to Austria—perhaps because of these very services—Austria was in danger of becoming little better than a Russian vassal. They therefore determined that this process should go no further; and when in 1853 the Czar took Austrian co-operation for granted, he was disillusioned. During 1854 Austria drifted further away from Russia, until on 2 December, she aligned herself with Russia's enemies in a definite treaty. The result was the disappearance of the last relics of the system of 1815. It was a diplomatic revolution more far-reaching in its effects than that of Kaunitz. No longer were there three powers in favour of the maintenance of the *status quo*; no longer was there any European Concert, even in embryo. The way was paved for the great events of little more than a decade, during which Bismarck unified Germany, Cavour unified Italy, and Napoleon III led France towards the disasters of 1870 and 1871.

The breakdown of the alliance between Russia, Austria, and Prussia, which rendered possible these stirring events, has been strangely neglected by historians. Interest has principally centred on the questions: Who was responsible for the Crimean War?, and, to a smaller extent, Did Britain 'back the wrong horse'? These questions are full of difficulties: the first, because conclusions have tended to be negative, that this or that man or country was not specially responsible, and the second, because it defies final decision and must always remain largely a matter of opinion. Attention has been diverted by these problems from the negotiations that took place during the Crimean War and from the diplomatic revolution that accompanied them. It is proposed to glance at this subject here.

During 1853 Czar Nicholas made persistent efforts to secure Austrian backing on the Eastern Question, as his quarrel with France and Britain grew more and more bitter. He first tried to persuade Franz Josef to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus committing Austria to the same policy as Russia, which had just occupied the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. When this failed he tried to bind Austria and Prussia to a friendly neutrality. 'Devrons-nous rester forts, à nous trois', he wrote to Franz Josef, 'en face des dangers communs qui nous menacent; ou bien cette antique alliance, héritage de nos prédécesseurs, qui assura le bonheur de l'Europe depuis 40 ans, doit-elle disparaître à jamais, pour faire place à la plus terrible des confusions?'¹ In pursuit of this policy Nicholas dispatched Orlov to Vienna in January 1854. Orlov was a man of most conciliatory disposition,² but his instructions were definite: Austria, out of gratitude for Russia's intervention in 1849, was to declare herself benevolently neutral if war broke out. Franz Josef replied that he could do this only if Nicholas would formally guarantee him the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans.³ Orlov said that this was impossible. It implied, in fact, that Austria desired to paralyse Russian military operations at the very moment that the Western powers were entering the Black Sea and paralysing Russian naval operations.⁴ Orlov thus left Vienna without success, and a similar mission to Berlin also failed. Nicholas's refusal to guarantee the Turkish *status quo* left a bad impression with Franz Josef, who declared that this was in contradiction

¹ Nicholas to Franz Josef, 4/16 Jan. 1854: Hanns Schlitter, *Aus der Regierungszeit Kaiser Franz Josef I* (Vienna, 1919), pp. 99-100.

² The choice of Orlov to carry the Czar's words seemed to Metternich the one hopeful symptom. Metternich to Buol, 27 Jan. 1854: C. J. Burckhardt, *Briefe des Fürsten Metternich an den Grafen Buol-Schauenstein, 1852-9* (Munich, 1934), pp. 153-4.

³ Orlov to Nesselrode, 22 January/3 February, 1854, no. ii: A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Vostochnaya Voïna, 1853-6* (St. Petersburg, 1908-13), Documentary Appendix, ii. 268.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1, pp. 265-6.

to Nicholas's previous statements of policy.¹ Franz Josef now verged more and more towards the anti-Russian views of Buol and Hübner, Bruck and Prokesch-Osten.² These views, though differing among themselves, agreed on one point: Russia was Austria's natural enemy in the Balkans, and the coming conflict must therefore be used to Austria's advantage. Austrian military men, however, were on the whole favourable to Russia,³ and Franz Josef's views were sometimes liable to vacillation. Nicholas therefore refused to believe that Austria's policy was really hostile until he received a rude shock in the shape of the Austrian demand, dated 3 June 1854, that Russia should evacuate the Principalities. Before that, he thought that the Austrian policy was merely 'to leave us in doubt and thus to do us injury'.⁴

The enemies of Russia did not share the obstinate blindness of Nicholas and were quick to attempt to draw Austria into closer alliance with themselves. In February and March 1854, negotiations were undertaken by which Britain and France and Austria and Prussia were to sign a treaty demanding Turkish integrity and the evacuation of the Principalities.⁵ The project proved unsuccessful, owing to the attitude of Frederick William IV of Prussia, who was still trying to arrange a peace. Austria, though she formally supported the allied ultimatum demanding the evacuation of the Principalities, dared not envisage the prospect of a hostile Prussia on her flank. So France and Britain alone declared war on

¹ Conversation with Meyendorff, Russian minister in Vienna, 21 February 1854: Heinrich Friedjung, *Der Krimkrieg und die österreichische Politik* (Stuttgart, 1911), p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 22-36. This work is poorly documented; it has some inaccuracies and many omissions. Nevertheless it is still the soundest exposition of these transactions from the Austrian side. Buol-Schauenstein was Austrian foreign minister. Hübner was minister in Paris, Bruck in Constantinople, and Prokesch-Osten in Frankfurt.

³ Some Austrian soldiers showed anti-Russian tendencies, e.g. Archduke Albrecht and General Ramming. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

⁴ Nicholas to Paskiewitch, 11 May 1854: Theodor Schiemann, *Geschichte Russlands unter Kaiser Nikolaus I* (Berlin, 1904-19), iv. 316.

⁵ Westmorland to Clarendon, 23 February 1854, no. 6 (Public Record Office, Foreign Office, 7/432) encloses a 'Project of Convention'.

Russia on 31 March 1854. The hope that the European Concert, anti-French in intention since 1815, would re-establish itself in an anti-Russian sense, was now manifestly disappearing. In the west, France and Britain were in alliance, and fighting Russia in the east. In the centre, Austria and Prussia, feeling their isolation, signed a treaty on 20 April.¹ Prussia engaged to defend Austria against Russian attack, which she knew would not be forthcoming; but no offensive policy was to be pursued unless Russia incorporated the Principalities or attacked the Balkans. It proved impossible to persuade Prussia to go further until late in November. Prussia attended no more ambassadorial conferences at Vienna after 23 May, and the diplomatic union of the four powers was definitely broken. The position now was that Austria and Prussia had refused to support Russia, and that the old 'Holy Alliance' had thus for the moment ceased to operate. But they had equally refused to co-operate with France and Britain, and no new diplomatic orientation had taken place. Henceforward the chief diplomatic activity consisted of the efforts of the western powers to draw Austria into the war, and the efforts of Austria to end the war by wringing concessions out of Russia without herself fighting.

Austria's objects during the Crimean War may conveniently be divided into positive and negative objects. Austria had refused to compromise with Russia and secure for herself a 'sphere of influence' which Nicholas had been willing to offer. She had therefore a positive interest in preventing a Russian domination of the Balkans that would be dangerous to her. Palmerston understood this and declared that the Russians would never get to Constantinople—Austria would step in before it came to that.² But Austria's wonted dilatoriness here seemed to be serving her well. Britain and France having drifted into war, Austria was well

¹ Text of treaty, *Parliamentary Papers*, Eastern Papers, ix.

² Palmerston to Newcastle, 16 June 1854: Evelyn Ashley, *Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston* (London, 1879), ii. 299.

pleased to see her battles being fought by others and displayed a natural reluctance to enter the war herself. Franz Josef later confessed that 'it may sound inhuman, but the longer they go on killing each other in the Crimea, the more we may count on having peace'.¹ Nevertheless, in June and July 1854, Austria showed herself prepared to fight in order to secure the Russian evacuation of the Principalities and the freedom of the Danube. These principles of policy were Austrian, not German; hence, in her positive interests, Austria went part of the way with the Western powers and diverged from Prussia and the rest of Germany. It was by emphasising these interests that France and Britain hoped to draw Austria into their camp.

Austria's chief negative interest was to restrict the war territorially and in its aims. During the war none of the combatants was ever in serious danger, but had Austria entered it, she would at once have been engaged in a struggle for existence. A trial by combat in the remote Crimea was very different from great-power warfare on a grand scale. Austria had been four times defeated by the first Napoleon, the very basis of her society had been shaken. She had no desire to experience another European upheaval, especially so soon after the revolutions of 1848, whether the third Napoleon were her enemy or her friend. Prussia, which lived in fear of a new Napoleonic march on the Rhine, shared Austria's anxiety to localise the war and limit its aims. On 3 June 1854, Austria demanded that Russia should evacuate the Principalities and so had reason to fear a Russian declaration of war.² It therefore became essential

¹ Franz Josef to Albert of Saxony, 18 August 1855: Otto Ernst, *Franz Josef as Revealed by His Letters*, tr. by Agnes Blake (London, 1927), p. 220. Compare the remark of Andlaw, Baden minister to Vienna, that in Germany 'man fühlte wohl instinktmässig, dass eine Fehde, in der sich zwei der uns feindseligsten, auf unsere Grenzen drückenden Mächte gegenseitig schwächen nicht gerade als eine vaterländische Calamität anzusehen sei'. Franz Freiherr von Andlaw, *Mein Tagebuch 1811 bis 1861* (Frankfurt a.M., 1862), ii. 225.

² Nicholas for some time seriously thought of war with Austria; and for the first time it was declared that the Russian route to Constantinople lay through Vienna. Friedjung, pp. 64-5.

for her to secure a definition and limitation of the allied war aims lest she should be drawn into an interminable struggle, in which (if it became general) she could not but be a loser. This, with a guarantee by France of her Italian possessions as a subsidiary aim, became the chief object of Austrian diplomacy during June and July 1854. And as a natural corollary she demanded the offensive-defensive alliance of France and Britain in case she should find herself at war with Russia.

Meanwhile in France the able foreign minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, was convinced that a cordial Franco-Austrian alliance was essential for French diplomatic stability. He saw too that such an alliance would shatter 'the system of the Emperor Nicholas' and alter the balance of power much to France's advantage. He recognised in Austria's anxiety for a definition of war aims a way of accomplishing this diplomatic revolution. Conversations therefore took place in Paris at the beginning of July between Drouyn de Lhuys, Thouvenel and Hübner, and from them emerged an elementary form of the famous 'four points', bases of peace which, after many vicissitudes, formed the foundation of the settlement of 1856.¹ France hardly played the part of a good ally, for she presented Britain with the *fait accompli* of certain bases of peace drawn up in conjunction with Austria; but she was sufficiently tactful to present them as Austrian in origin, though fully concurred in by France. Drouyn de Lhuys proposed to Britain that these potential peace terms might be committed to a protocol and signed at Vienna. Clarendon, the British foreign secretary, was already highly suspicious of Buol's proceedings and declared that 'we must not get entangled in negotiations'.² On 19 July the British

¹ Thouvenel was the political director at the French foreign office. Hübner was the Austrian ambassador in Paris and was acting in close collaboration with Buol-Schauenstein, the Austrian foreign minister. It is not clear whether these transactions began with Drouyn or with Hübner, but the idea was in any case French in the sense in that it emerged from secret negotiations undertaken in Paris.

² Clarendon to Aberdeen, 13 July 1854: *Selections from the Correspondence of George, Earl of Aberdeen* (privately printed, 1885; henceforward cited as *Aberdeen Correspondence*), vol. 1854-5, p. 169.

cabinet spent five hours in anxious consideration of the French protocol scheme and decided against 'entering into the consideration of the precise terms upon which peace might be made'.¹ There seems to have been no quarrel with the substance of the French protocol. Clarendon commended its 'firm tone',² and on 22 July a primitive form of the four points was laid down in a dispatch to Westmorland, British ambassador in Vienna.³ The objection was not to the points themselves but to their incorporation in a binding instrument, which would hamper British freedom in future negotiations. Westmorland was naturally puzzled and wrote: 'I consider Clarendon as in the worst of dilemmas; the Press and public voice and Opposition are calling out for impossible things, and he and his associates have not the power to resist it; so now they send conditions, and yet don't say they will treat upon them'.⁴

At this point matters were complicated by a scheme for a triple alliance between Austria, France and Britain. As early as 9 July Hübner had written to Buol recommending '*un traité par lequel les puissances s'engageraient à consacrer tous leurs moyens d'action au but commun, dont le minimum se trouve défini par les quatre points.*'⁵ Hübner was acting in close collaboration with the French, and Cowley, British minister in Paris, soon noticed that Buol 'had been pressed, through M. de Hübner, by M. Drouyn de Lhuys, to sign a treaty'.⁶ This is therefore another instance of

¹ Aberdeen to the Queen, 19 July, 1854: *ibid.*, p. 174.

² Clarendon to the Queen, 18 July 1854: *Royal Archives, Windsor Castle*, G. 15. I gratefully acknowledge the gracious permission of His Majesty the King to make use of unpublished material from the Royal Archives.

³ Clarendon to Westmorland, 22 July 1854, no. 248: F.O. 7/429. A similar dispatch was sent on the same day by Drouyn de Lhuys to Bourqueney.

⁴ Westmorland to Lady Westmorland, 28 July 1854: *The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland*, ed. by her daughter, Lady Rose Weigall (London, 1909), p. 233.

⁵ Lettre particulière, Hübner to Buol, 9 July 1854: Hübner, *Neuf ans de souvenirs d'un ambassadeur d'Autriche* (Paris, 1905-8), i. 253.

⁶ Cowley to Clarendon, 27 July 1854, no. 937: F.O. 27/1019.

France collaborating with Austria, behind the back of her allied belligerent, Britain. On 24 July Hübner received the order to enter into *pourparlers* with Drouyn concerning a treaty. But Buol's instruction was guarded with a very important reservation. Metternich characterised Buol as 'a knife with a sharp point but with no edge',¹ and Hübner noted, in a moment of exasperation, that Buol always left 'une petite porte ouverte pour les cas très fréquents où il serait obligé de reculer'.² Buol's little door on this occasion was the statement that the proposal contained only his personal impressions and was in no way binding upon Austria.³ On this unsatisfactory basis Drouyn de Lhuys drew up a draft treaty of triple alliance, founded on Buol's dispatches to Hübner. He also persisted in his endeavour to attach Austria to the four points, by incorporating them in some binding instrument. He therefore proposed an exchange of notes which, since it eliminated the necessity for a conference, would be more palatable to the British taste than a protocol.⁴ The whole series of documents was communicated to Clarendon by Baudin, the French chargé d'affaires, on 26 July 1854, and at about the same time they were forwarded to Vienna.

The separate negotiation between France and Austria on the subject of an alliance involving Britain was a distinct *mauvais procédé*. Buol specifically instructed Colloredo, Austrian minister in London, to say nothing about it, for he

¹ Quoted by Frederick Ferdinand, count von Beust, *Memoirs Written by Himself*, tr. by Henry de Worms (London, 1887), i. 104-5.

² 14 May, 1854: Hübner, i. 237. In fairness to Buol it must be added that this tortuous policy was largely the result of the constant danger of disavowal by Franz Josef.

³ Cowley to Clarendon, 27 July 1854, no. 937: F.O. 27/1019; Buol to Colloredo, 9 August 1854, no. 2: Vienna, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv (henceforward cited as 'Vienna'), Politische Archiv. England, viii. Fasc. 41.

⁴ Britain by this time agreed to the substance of the four points. Clarendon on 25 July referred to them as 'the 4 points on which the 3 powers have already agreed' (Clarendon to the Queen, 25 July, 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 15). What was objected to was not the points themselves but the principle of binding the country to them.

wished his own share in the preliminaries to appear trivial. On 26 July Hübner wrote urgently to Colloredo: 'Lord Cowley m'a demandé pourquoi V. E. avait vis-à-vis Lord Clarendon gardé le silence au sujet du projet de traité à trois.'¹ Colloredo thereupon approached Clarendon, who already knew of the project from a French source, and who expressed his dissatisfaction in vigorous terms. When Colloredo explained the motive of his silence, Clarendon retorted that 'puisque c'est par la France seule qu'il a eu connaissance de ce projet . . . c'est également avec la France qu'il traitera de son exécution'.² Colloredo was much concerned and suggested that a dispatch might be sent to mollify Clarendon.³ The incident is in itself trivial, but it illustrates how Buol's oversubtle diplomacy tended to overreach itself, and the growing suspicion of Clarendon that he was in danger of being lured into a scheme for concluding an unsatisfactory peace.

The drafts of the proposed tripartite treaty, though they led to nothing at this period, are nevertheless worthy of study, since, after four months of almost continuous negotiation, they culminated in the treaty of 2 December 1854. The draft treaty as agreed upon by France and Austria declared roughly: (i) no negotiations shall be entered into with Russia except in concert and on the basis of the four points; (ii) Austria shall occupy the Principalities; (iii) if war between Austria and Russia shall result, the Western powers promise Austria their armed support; and (iv) the accession of other European courts shall be invited to the present treaty. The original Austrian suggestion had pro-

¹ Cipher dispatch, 26 July 1854, received in London on 28 July. Enclosed in Colloredo to Buol, 28 July 1854, no. 81 C: Vienna, England, viii. Fasc. 40.

² Colloredo to Buol, *ibid.*

³ Lettre particulière, Colloredo to Buol, 28 July 1854: *ibid.*, Fasc. 41. The conciliatory dispatch suggested by Colloredo was duly sent (Buol to Colloredo, 9 August 1854, no. 2: *ibid.*). Buol explained that the project was French in origin, and he therefore thought it right that the first overture should come from France. Clarendon accepted the explanation, and 'il me répéta qu'il avait précédemment entièrement ignoré que ce projet eut été conçu à Paris' (Colloredo to Buol, 19 August, 1854, no. 86 C: *ibid.*, Fasc. 40).

posed negotiations on the terms of peace to be offered to Russia. This did not figure in the French draft, presumably because it was known that Britain would not consent to such a clause. The Austrians made no objection to this important modification, and the draft treaty as a whole confirms the fact, known from the disposition of Austrian troops¹ and other sources, that the Vienna cabinet was at this date prepared to fight to secure a Russian retreat from the Principalities. In return, a definition of war aims was demanded: Austria had to be sure that she was embarking on an old-fashioned war for the balance of power, and that she was privy to no 'theory of nationalities'. She also demanded security at home and hinted that 'the dominions of Austria in Italy shall be guaranteed to her'.² As early as July all the proposals were being discussed that ultimately led to the conventions of December 1854.

On 29 July the British cabinet considered the proposed treaty and exchange of notes. With two minor alterations in the treaty, they were accepted; but Hübner noted that 'les dispositions du Cabinet anglais sont évidemment tièdes'.³ At best the treaty might encourage Austria to adopt a hostile attitude towards Russia; at worst it could do no harm. Moreover the scheme of making the four points into a binding diplomatic instrument, rejected by the cabinet on 19 July, was accepted on 29 July only because it was a necessary preliminary to the tripartite treaty. The French drafts were also accepted in Vienna, and on 1 August Westmorland was writing in great delight that 'Buol agrees to proposed Notes and Treaty, in short, buckles to everything'.⁴ On 2 August

¹ Described by F. A. M. P. Wimpffen in his *Errinerungen aus der Walachei während der Besetzung durch die oesterreichischen Truppen in den Jahren 1854-6* (Vienna, 1878, first published in the *Oesterreichische Revue*, 1864-7).

² Cowley to Clarendon, 27 July 1854, no. 937: F.O. 27/1019. In this important dispatch the whole of the Austrian demands are summarised.

³ Cipher telegram, Hübner to Buol, 30 July 1854, 5 p.m.: Vienna, Frankreich ix. Fasc. 45.

⁴ Westmorland to Lady Westmorland, 1 August 1854: *Correspondence of Lady Westmorland*, p. 234.

Hübner was noting this 'grande nouvelle', adding that 'à Londres on demande des modifications insignifiantes et inutiles'.¹ But at this very moment, when Austria seemed about to cross the Rubicon, an event occurred that deprived the treaty of all its attractions for her: the Russians began to evacuate the Principalities.² On 1 August Westmorland's son wrote that 'Buol has a report (seemingly authentic) of the retreat of the Russians from Wallachia. If it be true, they are taking this step very ungraciously, without any communication to the people here.'³ Buol was not taken by surprise, having had earlier indications from Valentin Esterházy, Austrian minister in St. Petersburg, that the Russians were likely to retreat.⁴ But Buol evidently had to wait until he was certain that the retreat was to be peaceful and complete. To gain time he therefore raised technical objections to the trivial modifications proposed by the British cabinet on 29 July. The French government was distracted by this news. On 2 August Baudin called on Aberdeen 'to impart his grief' and urged the abandonment of the British modifications.⁵ Drouyn de Lhuys at the same time put pressure on Cowley to secure the consent of the British cabinet to the treaty in its original form,⁶ and at Vienna the French ambassador Bourqueney proposed that he and Westmorland should write to Clarendon 'to force an agreement'.⁷ The simple-minded Westmorland believed that the British alterations had raised some real difficulty, but clearly this does not

¹ Hübner, i. 261.

² 'Am 27 Juli begannen die definitiven Rückzugbewegungen in umfassender weise': Wimpffen, p. 88. The news, of course, would take some time to reach Vienna in an authentic form.

³ Julian Fane to Lady Westmorland, 1 August 1854: *Correspondence of Lady Westmorland*, p. 235.

⁴ Esterházy to Buol, 21 June 1854, no. 55 A-C, and 6 July, no. 60 B: Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 35.

⁵ Aberdeen to Clarendon, 2 August, 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 185.

⁶ Cowley to Clarendon, 3 August, 1854, no. 969: F.O. 27/1020.

⁷ Westmorland to Lady Westmorland, 3 August 1854: *Correspondence of Lady Westmorland*, pp. 235-6.

supply the true motive of the swift change in Austrian policy. The unofficial news that the Russian troops were evacuating the Principalities gave the Vienna cabinet a real hope of winning its point without incurring the dangers of war. The treaty of offensive-defensive alliance, which had seemed a very present help in time of trouble, was instantly converted into a menace—a means by which Austria might be drawn, against her will, from her neutrality.

On 5 August Buol announced to Bourqueney and Westmorland that Austria would sign the treaty only when it became clear that the Russians were *not* going to evacuate the Principalities. Though Buol had carefully refrained from committing his government to the treaty, his attitude was bitterly resented by the allied ambassadors: they 'objected most strongly to this delay, and the French ambassador refused to sign the notes' which incorporated the four points.¹ The French government did not adopt so decided an attitude as its ambassador. Drouyn told Cowley that he 'approved the proceedings of M. de Bourqueney, who hoped by this refusal to induce the Austrian government to sign the two instruments at the same time. . . . Nevertheless, His Excellency is so much alive to the advantages of the Alliance which he conceives must result from the exchange of Notes, that having ascertained that Lord Westmorland was to follow the instructions sent to the French Minister in this matter, he has authorised M. de Bourqueney to exchange the Notes without signing the Treaty.'² It was in these circumstances that Britain was led or driven into a formal agreement upon the four points. She had rejected such a project on 19 July and consented on 29 July only because it formed part of a larger transaction which might bring about the active co-operation of Austria. When the treaty fell to the ground Drouyn de Lhuys took advantage of the fact that Westmorland had orders to follow Bourqueney, to commit

¹ Cipher telegram and dispatch No. 292, Westmorland to Clarendon, 5 August 1854: F.O. 7/435.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 7 August 1854, no. 980: F.O. 27/1020.

Britain nonetheless to the four points. In this instance, as in several others, control of British policy seems to have fallen almost entirely from the hands of the listless Aberdeen ministry—to be picked up and wielded by the energetic Drouyn.

On 8 August the Russian ambassador, Gortschakov, told Buol that the Czar had ordered the complete evacuation of the Principalities. Buol nevertheless told the allied ambassadors that he was prepared to proceed immediately to the exchange of notes. Gortschakov's words provided him with a valid reason for refusing to sign the tripartite treaty—'it could not be signed in its present form, as it was founded upon the resistance of the Emperor to the evacuation of the Principalities . . . but he added that circumstances might very soon occur which might render necessary an act of a similar nature'.¹ On 8 August, therefore, Austrian diplomacy had secured a double triumph. Gortschakov's announcement meant that Austria's interests in the Balkans were safe and had been secured without war. Moreover, not only was she about to limit the war territorially by thrusting her troops between Russia and Turkey-in-Europe, but also, by the four points, she had limited the war in its objects.)

These four points to which Britain was now committed despite herself, suffered from lack of clarity, but they at least provided some rough indication of the terms upon which the allies might be expected to make peace.² They fell into some contempt before the end of the war, and there has ever since been a tendency to regard them as little more than diplomatic word-spinning. It is to be remembered, however, that an exchange of notes is an internationally binding instrument—the documents of 8 August lacked nothing in

¹ Cipher telegram, Westmorland to Clarendon, 8 August 1854: F.O. 7/435.

² The notes are to be found in draft form in the State Papers Domestic, France, F.O. 27/1039. The final form is attached to Westmorland to Clarendon, 8 August 1854, no. 293: F.O. 7/435. They are printed in *Parliamentary Papers*, Eastern Papers, xi.

theoretical validity. They were also of great practical importance, forming the basis upon which peace was ultimately made. When a member of the British cabinet declared, 'No words can express the sense of utter weariness with which, during many months, we used to hear the diplomatic rubbish that circled round the discussion of those Four Points',¹ he was voicing a sturdy masculine sentiment, a desire for action rather than words. But such a point of view scarcely suggests that the British cabinet understood that it was only through these same four points that peace could be made, unless the allies gained far greater military successes than could be expected. The four points, as expressed in the notes of 8 August, declared: 'the three Powers are equally of opinion that the relations of the Sublime Porte with the Imperial Court of Russia cannot be re-established on solid and durable bases' (i) if the Russian guarantee of the Principalities be not replaced by a European guarantee; (ii) if the Danube be not 'freed'; (iii) if 'the Treaty of 1841 be not revised in concert by all the High Contracting Powers in the interest of the Balance of Power in Europe'; and (iv) if the Christian peoples of the Porte be not placed under European rather than under Russian protection. No negotiation was to take place with Russia save on these points. France and Britain reserved the right to demand further guarantees if circumstances warranted, but, unless the four points were entirely meaningless, these further guarantees could result only from an *interpretation* of them and could not be entirely new. Austria admitted that there might be a few minor demands in the Baltic and in Asia, but she had every right to regard the four points as a real 'crystallisation' of the allied demands in the Near East.

Austria had now partly aligned herself with France and Britain. The diplomatic revolution, however, was only half accomplished. Britain and France regarded the definition of their war aims as a concession which Austria should repay by

¹ George Douglas, eighth Duke of Argyll (1823-1900), *Autobiography and Memoirs*, ed. by the Dowager Duchess of Argyll (London, 1906), i. 484.

participating in the war. The Austrians, for their part, considered that the allies should be grateful for the Russian evacuation of the Principalities. Moreover, from the allied point of view, the transaction of 8 August was incomplete: an essential half of it, the tripartite treaty, had fallen to the ground. The next four months produced successive draft treaties by which the allies strove to force Austria to complete the transaction which the exchange of notes had begun. These efforts and the treaty of 2 December in which they culminated are now to be considered.

II. NEGOTIATION OF THE TREATY OF 2 DECEMBER 1854

No sooner had the four points attained international importance by the exchange of notes than Austria communicated them to Russia. This communication was not transmitted in the form of an ultimatum, much to the disappointment of the Western powers, who had, however, no right to expect that it would be presented in such a form. Their disappointment would have been greater had they known the precise wording of Buol's dispatches. Buol promised that, if the points were accepted, Russia '*pourrait compter sur notre empressement d'adresser aux Cours Maritimes les plus sérieuses représentations afin de les déterminer à consentir sans délai à l'ouverture de négociations sur ces mêmes bases et à s'entendre sur une suspension simultanée des opérations militaires*'. He added that Franz Josef was so confident of Russia's good intentions that '*Sa Majesté a donné sur le champ l'ordre à une partie de ses armées de s'arrêter, et Elle s'occupe même de plans de dislocation plus étendus*'. In a private letter to Esterházy Buol emphasised the advantages that Russia would derive from accepting the points.

'Du moment qu'elle se serait prononcée pour l'acceptation et que les cours maritimes feraient des difficultés, tout le blâme retomberait sur ces dernières et nos relations politiques avec elles subiraient comme de raison dès ce moment un changement très notable. On peut compter

que des vues ambitieuses et des prétentions exagérées de leur part ne trouveraient jamais de l'appui chez nous.' ¹

These sentences are an accurate description of the policy to which Austria adhered in August 1854, and to which she continued to adhere. They show why the new alignment of France, Britain, and Austria—now in the making—could never have the stability and staying power of the old alignment of Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

Meanwhile Drouyn de Lhuys, having made as much as possible of the notes of 8 August, at once took up the broken threads of negotiation for the tripartite treaty. While Austria assured Russia that the maritime powers might be drawn into peace, the maritime powers assured each other that Austria might be drawn into war. Drouyn was warmly backed by Clarendon in his treaty-making endeavours. Clarendon instructed Westmorland to press for a tripartite treaty and informed him 'that the Governments of England and France are willing to agree that the conditions attained in the Note . . . shall be regarded as the Bases of Negotiation with Russia'.² Drouyn commented that this accorded with his own original proposition, which had then been rejected by Britain, and added that he would at once draw up a draft treaty.³ Britain's change of front has a double explanation. First, Austria was chiefly interested in the Principalities, which Russia was now evacuating. Hence more tempting bait would have to be offered if Austria were to be drawn from her neutrality. Secondly, the Crimean expedition, long decided upon between France and Britain, was on the point of sailing. The adventurous nature of this expedition made Austrian aid, whether by actual war or by menacing troop

¹ Buol to Esterházy, 10 August 1854, no. 1 and no. 3 and private letter: Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 36.

² Clarendon to Westmorland, 15 August 1854, no. 262: F.O. 7/429. It was added that this was only 'upon the express understanding, however, that they are not parties to the transmission of these conditions to St. Petersburg, and that hostilities are not to be suspended until the Preliminaries of Peace are signed'.

³ Cowley to Clarendon, 14 August 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 16.

movements, all the more necessary. Austria, on the contrary, looked with jaundiced eye on the departure of the allied troops to a remote peninsula, where they would be of no use to her in case it came to war. Hence, as the allies became more eager, Austria became more elusive. The British cabinet entirely failed to understand the Austrian position, and a month later Clarendon was capable of sending the following hysterical telegram to Westmorland: 'Austria is at this moment rendering the greatest service to Russia, and we have a right to expect that she should employ means, military or otherwise, to prevent the Russian army from being sent to attack us in the Crimea.'¹ It is scarcely necessary to notice that the 'right' here stated is unknown to the law of nations.

The moment was therefore unpropitious for the busy treaty drafting into which Drouyn de Lhuys now plunged. The French and British governments soon agreed on a draft, but, as soon as the idea was mooted, Hübner, who was generally favourable to such projects, declared that his government was unlikely to accept it.² Instead, the Austrians were busily arranging their occupation of the Principalities and withdrawing some of their troops from the Polish frontier.³ The Austrian retreat from the compromising position with the Western powers, foreshadowed by the rejection of the tripartite treaty in the first days of August, was now in full swing. Drouyn understood that the moment was unfavourable for putting pressure on Austria. The new draft treaty, which pitched the allied demands high, was intended for future use. Drouyn told Cowley 'that he was of opinion that Austria should not be urged to sign it, but that France and England should wait until she herself proposed to do so. . . . If, in consequence of supporting our demands at St. Petersburg, she excited the ire of the Czar, and hostilities

¹ 18 September 1854: F.O. 7/429.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 14 August 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 16.

³ Friedjung, p. 83. This was no doubt part of the 'dislocation' promised to the Russians by Buol on 10 August 1854.

were threatened or attempts made to alienate her Slavonic population by Russian agents, she would be the first to ask for a treaty, and the two powers might then impose their own conditions.'¹ The agreed draft was therefore laid aside in anticipation of the contingency that Austria, menaced by Russia, would be a humble petitioner for Western support.

The contingency envisaged by Drouyn was almost realised. The Russians regarded the four points as little better than a piece of impertinence. On 16 August Esterházy waited upon Nesselrode, the Russian chancellor, and communicated Buol's dispatches of 10 August. 'Est-ce ainsi', said Nesselrode, 'que vous répondez aux sacrifices que nous nous portons en évacuant les Principautés? Comment, nous cédant aux instances de l'Autriche et dans ce même moment vous exigez de nouvelles concessions? Est-ce juste?'² The Russian resolve to reject the four points was so decided that Esterházy disconsolately reported that 'il ne m'a pas même été possible d'observer une hésitation ou une fluctuation dans la décision prise par le cabinet russe'.³ Nesselrode indeed had the utmost difficulty in dissuading Nicholas from declaring war upon Austria. The irate Czar drew up a 'projet de déclaration de guerre à l'Autriche', and Nesselrode replied with a memorandum.⁴ He argued that

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, 17 August 1854, no. 1022: F.O. 27/1021.

² Esterházy to Buol, 21 August 1854, no. 70 A-E: Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 35. 'Instances' is underlined in red, with a question mark against it. This was presumably done at the Austrian foreign office or by Franz Josef.

³ Same to same, 30 August 1854, no. 71 A-E, *ibid.* But Nesselrode told Werther, the Prussian minister, that Russia objected less to the contents of the four points than to the way in which they had been presented by Austria—just when Russia was evacuating the Principalities. Werther to the King, 26 August 1854: Politischer Bericht No. 13, Preussisches Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Ausw. Amt, IABq, Türkei 44, vol. 19.

⁴ Mémoire, 7 September 1854: *Lettres et Papiers du Chancelier Comte Charles de Nesselrode, 1760-1856*, publiés et annotés par le Comte A. de Nesselrode (Paris, 1904), xi. 75-6. Baron Jomini, in his anonymous *Diplomatic Study on the Crimean War from Russian Official Sources* (London, 1882) misquotes the last sentence of Nesselrode's memorandum. Nesselrode wrote that the four points had been rejected 'sans examen'; but in the *Diplomatic Study* (ii. 141-2) these somewhat intransigent words are tactfully omitted.

if war were now declared against Austria, 'au lieu de trois ennemis, nous aurions à lutter contre l'Europe entière'. Nesselrode prevailed, but the incident shows how near to the mark Drouyn's hypothesis had been. It needed the victory of the Alma and the pressure of Prussia before Russia, two months later, accepted the four points. Meanwhile, on 1 September, Westmorland sent a decisive telegram to Clarendon: the four points had been formally rejected by Russia. The Crimean expedition was on the point of sailing, and nervous tension in the British cabinet was high. It was decided to make a second effort to bind Austria by a tripartite treaty.¹

On 5 September the draft treaty which had been drawn up a fortnight earlier was dispatched to Westmorland, with instructions to press it on Buol. It has already been seen that this draft was drawn up for a definite contingency, a humble Austria supplicating for support. The contingency had not arisen, but the treaty was nevertheless pressed upon Austria. Apart from the initial absurdity of this proceeding, there was no lack of evidence as to the attitude Austria was likely to adopt. When Westmorland hinted at a treaty, Buol replied that he must await news from St. Petersburg.² Nesselrode expressed himself as delighted with his reports from Vienna,³ and the disappointment of the allied statesmen was correspondingly great. Clarendon wrote in high anger that the Austrians 'intended to throw us over in the most complete and almost impudent manner'.⁴ But the doomed tripartite project was allowed to go forward. On 13 September Westmorland and Bourqueney waited upon Buol, who gave the expected refusal. By the proposed treaty, he said, war 'was so clearly indicated as to attribute to the government of Austria a

¹ Clarendon to the Queen, 4 September 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 16.

² Westmorland to Clarendon, 6 September 1854, no. 338: F.O. 7/436.

³ Esterházy to Buol, 15 September 1854, no. 74 A-B: Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 35.

⁴ Clarendon to Aberdeen, 10 September 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 211. On the same day Hübner found Drouyn in a similar frame of mind (*Neufans*, i. 266).

position towards Russia more advanced than that which they had assumed'.¹ Meanwhile, Drouyn was using threatening words to Hübner. He declared that the four points could now scarcely be considered binding, since 'the Notes were exchanged under the supposition that a further convention would be signed binding Austria to aid in bringing about such a peace as she herself had deemed essential to the future welfare of Europe'.² The effect of these September negotiations was therefore not to strengthen but to weaken the bonds between Austria and the Western powers, for the notes of 8 August now rested on a very insecure foundation. A decided coolness arose between Austria and the allies. Buol defended himself warmly against the allied insinuations and said that a 'serious estrangement' might develop unless all knowledge of the diplomatic situation were kept from the public.³ This coolness, however, lasted only a few days. The quick march of events in the Crimea and the still quicker march of rumour soon brought the scheme for a tripartite treaty to the front again.

Though Buol had maintained a bold front towards the Western powers, he was full of misgivings. Russia, he knew, was alienated as long as Austria refused to compromise with her in the Balkans. In imagination he saw Prussia outstripping Austria in the struggle for domination in the German *Bund*; he saw Austria, without allies, menaced by French intrigue in Italy, by Russian intrigue in the Slavonic provinces, and by revolutionary movements in half-pacified Hungary. Rightly or wrongly he was convinced that Austria's safety lay only in closer alliance with the Western powers, and he at once strove to convert the young Emperor to his point of view. On 26 September he wrote a memorandum for Franz Josef on these lines. '*That peace which is necessary for us*', he declared, 'we can gain only in alliance with the Maritime Powers, Russia will never give

¹ Westmorland to Clarendon, 13 September 1854, no. 348: F.O. 7/436.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 13 September 1854, no. 1113: F.O. 27/1022.

³ Westmorland to Clarendon, 20 September 1854, no. 354: F.O. 7/436.

it to us.' ¹ Buol's efforts were aided by events in the Crimea. The allied armies landed without encountering resistance, and on 20 September was fought the spectacular and seemingly decisive battle of the Alma, news of which was accompanied by a false report of the fall of Sebastopol, which was almost universally believed. Franz Josef followed the course of the struggle with boyish enthusiasm; Buol wired congratulations to London and Paris; and certainly the Western powers were daily becoming more desirable allies.

Buol struck while the iron was hot. On 1 October Westmorland telegraphed that 'Buol decided three days since to transmit to London and Paris a communication having for object to re-establish the good understanding between Austria and the Western powers which recent circumstances appear to have disturbed'.² On 2 October a draft treaty was forwarded to France and Britain. This draft had been drawn up by Bourqueney and Westmorland, who vouched that it was likely to be accepted by Buol at once, if proposed to him by the Western powers.³ Though drawn up by the allied ambassadors, it was fundamentally an Austrian scheme,⁴ and was regularly referred to as such. The oversubtle Buol had hidden his identity, lest the rejection of the scheme should increase the diplomatic coolness which it was now his object to end. But the Bourqueney-Westmorland draft treaty bore evident marks of its origin: nowhere was there the slightest hint that Austria would make any forward move. On 3

¹ Ian Morrow, *The Black Sea Question* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University Library), pp. 37-8.

² F.O. 7/436. Buol evidently spoke of 'three days' because he wished it to appear that his idea arose *before* the good news from the Crimea. This was true of Buol, but not necessarily true of Franz Josef.

³ Westmorland to Clarendon, 2 October 1854, no. 366: F.O. 7/436. Buol was at this date not only concerting schemes with the Western powers but using far more hostile language to Gortschakov: Stockhausen to Lenthe, 6 October 1854, no. 130: Hannover Staatsarchiv, Hannover 9, Türkei 27 E.

⁴ In the Royal Archives the document was labelled (in Prince Albert's hand) 'Project of a Treaty between Austria, England, and France, as drawn up by Lord Westmorland and M. de Bourqueney, embodying Ct Buol's views' (G. 17).

October Buol wrote a long letter to Colloredo, which was communicated to Clarendon on 7 October. Buol declared that 'l'Autriche n'a pas pris l'engagement formel d'une co-opération active, encore moins a-t-elle contracté l'obligation de prêter cette co-opération à une époque précise'.¹ This was the attitude above all which the allied statesmen wished to modify, and there was nothing in the Bourqueney-Westmorland draft to bring the active co-operation of Austria nearer.

When Clarendon first heard that the Austrians were prepared to sign a treaty, he sarcastically remarked, even before he had seen the draft, that 'Ld C. ventures to think that we might borrow a favourite phrase of Austria, and reserve to ourselves "an entire freedom of action"'.² This was written in full belief that Sebastopol had fallen. When the bubble burst a few days later, Clarendon wrote bitterly that 'Hübner begged he might be invited to the *Te Deum* and Buol announced an offensive and defensive treaty. If the news proves all false, I shall be curious to see what course will be taken by Austria.'³ Clarendon was so hostile to Austria that Aberdeen was much disturbed. He persuaded the court to use its influence with him, lest he should 'discourage the proposal of a tripartite treaty'.⁴ Clarendon remained obdurate, and the arrival of the Bourqueney-Westmorland draft did nothing to reconcile him. He wrote to the Queen that 'the treaty binds Austria to nothing, and although in that respect useless, yet it might be adopted if the condition 'sine qua non' made at the same time by Ct Buol was not the resumption of

¹ State Papers Domestic, Austria, F.O. 7/442. This letter is inaccurately printed by Eugène Guichen, *La Guerre de Crimée, 1854-6, et l'attitude des puissances européennes* (Paris, 1936), p. 193. This study does not give a coherent account of the events leading up to the treaty of 2 December.

² Clarendon to the Queen, 3 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17.

³ Clarendon to Aberdeen, 5 October 1854: Frances Balfour, *The Life of George, Fourth Earl of Aberdeen* (London, 1922), ii. 257.

⁴ The Queen to Aberdeen, 7 October 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 241: the Queen to Clarendon (Prince Albert draft), 7 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17. For the part played by the court during this period, see Dr. G. B. Henderson's article, 'The Influence of the Crown, 1854-6', *Juridical Review* (Edinburgh), Dec. 1936, reprinted above pp. 68-97.

the Conferences at Vienna in order to discuss the *four points*.¹ He was in fact slowly concentrating his obstinacy on the question of conferences and half-heartedly reconciling himself, under pressure, to the idea of some sort of treaty with Austria. Meanwhile events had been taking a somewhat similar course in France. Drouyn told Cowley that both he and the Emperor 'thought the propositions detestable, and that they could not be seriously entertained'. But Thouvenel reasoned that 'if we refuse Austria everything, she will escape us—and though the proposed treaty is of no immediate benefit to the Allies, it binds Austria more closely to them, and at all events commits her towards Russia'. Thouvenel's words bore fruit, and Drouyn and Cowley agreed that it would be best to propose a counter project.² On 10 October the Queen wrote Clarendon a letter pointing out that 'the success in the Crimea (Alma) ought to be followed up by strengthening the alliance of the European Powers, else it may turn out a sterile victory'.³ This seems to have converted Clarendon reluctantly to the idea of a tripartite treaty, and he was in a less unsuitable frame of mind to receive the French counter project when it arrived on 12 October.⁴

The French counter project, which adhered to the plan of reassembling the Conference at Vienna, was considered by the British cabinet on 17 October. 'Nothing was finally settled except not to reject the proposal altogether', and

¹ Clarendon to the Queen, 8 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17. Collorredo commented that 'le mot conférence effarouche un peu ici' (Lettre particulière, Collorredo to Buol, 10 October 1854: Vienna, England, viii. Fasc. 41).

² Extract, Cowley to Clarendon, 6 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17; same to same, 8 October 1854, no. 1223: F.O. 27/1023.

³ Prince Albert draft, the Queen to Clarendon, 10 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 17. The letter advised 'a temperate consideration of the Austrian proposals, and an amendment of them in those points which seem to require them'.

⁴ He ruefully declared 'that it is impossible not to foresee that there must be great difficulty in agreeing to a treaty, the contracting parties not meaning in reality the same thing' (Clarendon to the Queen, 11 October 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 18).

Clarendon was instructed to discuss with Walewski, the French ambassador, 'to what extent the proposed treaty may be further modified'.¹ The interview with Walewski seems to have been abortive, and on 20 October the cabinet decided that Clarendon 'should express a strong desire to enter into a treaty with Austria, having for its object some more definite understanding with a view to future co-operation' but at the same time indicate the British objection to further negotiation on the four points.² The result of these cabinet meetings could hardly have been less satisfactory. The British ministers, while adopting a most conciliatory tone, proclaimed themselves incapable of thinking of a suitable project and as usual left the initiative to others. The Bourqueney-Westmorland draft was rejected in a friendly way, and no alternative was suggested in its stead. But Aberdeen, though he lacked strength of will, did not lack the insight to perceive Britain's illogical position. The reasons given against a renewal of conferences, he said, were by no means reasons against a treaty, and the sooner allied relations with Austria were properly defined, the better.³ In any case, the British refusal of the tripartite project was tendered with an unconcealed air of regret. At the same time in Austria Buol was pursuing his policy of putting relentless pressure on Russia. On 22 October the army was ordered to be set on a war footing. Characteristically this step had been delayed until the campaigning season was past. The object of the mobilisation was indeed diplomatic, not military: pressure had to be exerted on Russia to force her to accept the four points. Moreover, hints were coming from St. Petersburg that Russia was likely to respond to such pressure. On 16 October Esterházy was noting the effect of the battle of the Alma. 'On m'assure même', he

¹ Aberdeen to the Queen, 17 October 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 258.

² Same to same, 20 October 1854: *ibid.*, pp. 258-9. Partly printed in Bal-four, ii. 260.

³ Aberdeen to Clarendon, 23 October 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 260.

wrote, 'que l'Empereur est tout disposé aujourd'hui, surtout si les alliés ne parviennent pas à s'emparer de Sebastopol, à entrer en négociation sur les garanties recommandées par la Cour de Vienne.'¹ Buol had therefore an increasing hope of ending the war without Austria's active intervention. His language to the St. Petersburg cabinet was firm, but he continued to hold out hopes that Austrian good offices would prevent the Western powers from being exorbitant in their demands.² He therefore took in good part the rejection of the Bourqueney-Westmorland draft. He knew that things were drifting in the direction of a treaty, and he could afford to wait. There was thus a growing opinion in Britain, France, and Austria that some treaty should be signed, and the main difficulty was simply to find a suitable form of words. So it is not surprising that, a fortnight after the rejection of the French counter project, still another French project was produced, and on this occasion hailed with something like enthusiasm by most of the British ministers.

The new tripartite project was communicated by Walewski to Clarendon on 1 November. This draft cleverly concealed the points which the British had been unable to stomach in the previous French scheme, without eliminating them. The four points were reaffirmed, but in vaguer terms.³

Moreover, if peace had not been made on the basis of the four points by the following April, 'les hautes parties contractantes conviennent de se concerter de nouveau sur les moyens les plus efficaces d'atteindre le but de leur alliance'. When this draft was drawn up and when the British agreed

¹ Esterházy to Buol, 16 October 1854, no. 77 A-K: Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 35.

² Lettre particulière (copie), Buol to Esterházy, 27 October 1854: *ibid.*, Fasc. 36.

³ This impressed Russell, who wrote: 'The great improvement in the new draft consists in the less importance given to the 4 articles, so that although they are preserved, larger terms might be put forward without any imputation from Prussia or others of bad faith' (Russell to Clarendon, 4 November, 1854: Clarendon Papers). I am indebted to Professor Temperley for permission to make use of extracts from Clarendon's private papers.

to it, Russian acceptance of the four points seemed as far away as ever. Hence the most reasonable interpretation of the clause was that the allies should concert war plans, though this was merely hinted.¹ But after the Russian acceptance of the four points, the Austrian interpretation became the more reasonable: the powers should concert to secure a peace on those terms. Such at least was the subsequent interpretation of the treaty, whatever may have been the designs of the French when they drafted it in terms that were consciously vague, if not consciously ambiguous.

Clarendon was much pleased with the new draft and wrote, 'we ought to be only too happy if Austria will agree to it'.² Russell considered it 'a greatly improved version of the Treaty' and gave his full consent to its being proposed at Vienna.³ Aberdeen naturally concurred, for he had been opposed to the rejection of the previous French scheme.⁴ This new British eagerness was caused not so much by the alterations in the draft as by the turn of events in the Crimea. The early enthusiasm of the beginning of October was past: men no longer lived in daily expectation of the fall of Sebastopol. The great bombardment which was to obliterate Sebastopol's defences took place on 17 October. It was a complete failure, and on the twenty-third the British commander was writing: 'In the Crimea, we hold only the position on which we stand.'⁵ When the British statesmen considered the new French draft, their minds were full of the failure of the bombardment. The only prospect now was a long and desperate siege, which bore an ominous resemb-

¹ The previous French project had been more precise. Russell indeed wrote that the new draft will 'be more acceptable to Austria, as it does not bind her to make war in April in certain contingencies, which is a stipulation that would hardly work' (Russell to Clarendon, 2 November 1854: *ibid.*).

² Clarendon to Aberdeen, 2 November 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 265.

³ Russell to Clarendon, 2 November 1854: Clarendon Papers.

⁴ Aberdeen to Clarendon, 2 November 1854: *Aberdeen Correspondence*, vol. 1854-5, p. 266.

⁵ Raglan to Newcastle, 23 October 1854: John Martineau, *The Life of Henry Pelham, Fifth Duke of Newcastle, 1811-64* (London, 1908), p. 174.

lance to the plight of the Athenians before Syracuse. Garbled reports of the Pyrrhic victory of Balaclava (24 October) were arriving. The British ministers indeed felt that a treaty with Austria might be the only means of saving the army in the Crimea. They therefore agreed that the French draft should be sent to Vienna, though they did not yet commit themselves finally to its precise wording. The draft provisionally agreed to was thus sent (6 and 7 November) to the French and British ambassadors in Vienna, and for some ten days there was a lull in the diplomatic activities of London and Paris. But during these ten days great events were casting their shadows before. First, it became evident that Russia was at last going to accept the four points. Secondly, the prolonged negotiations in the German *Bund* were obviously on the point of reaching some conclusion. Thirdly, the hard-won battle of Inkerman and the growing reports of disorganisation and suffering in the Crimea were still further sapping the confidence of the allied statesmen. The diplomatic situation had radically altered by the time that the Austrian counter project was being debated in the cabinets of the maritime powers.

Ever since 8 August Frederick William IV of Prussia and Chancellor Nesselrode had been pressing Czar Nicholas to adopt the four points. Their efforts were not relaxed even after Nicholas decisively rejected them. Allied successes in the Crimea and the Austrian mobilisation of 22 October added weight to their arguments; at the beginning of November Nicholas reluctantly decided upon acceptance. On the eighth Esterházy wired to Buol that acceptance was imminent, and on the seventeenth he was able to announce that it had actually taken place.¹ Westmorland telegraphed the news to Clarendon on the twentieth, adding that Buol 'stated distinctly that he did not consider that this com-

¹ Cipher telegram, Esterházy to Buol, 8 November 1854. This dispatch reached Vienna at 6 p.m. on the same day. Cipher telegram, same to same, 17 November 1854. This dispatch did not reach Vienna until the twentieth (Vienna, Russland, x. Fasc. 35). Esterházy was informed of the Russian acceptance on 16 November.

munication ought in any manner to interrupt the negotiations between our Governments'.¹ But, whatever may have been Buol's private opinion, the Russian adhesion was considered of sufficient importance by the Austrian cabinet for the mobilisation order of 20 October to be revoked, in so far as it had not already taken effect.² Esterházy's telegram announcing the decisive Russian acceptance had been received on 20 November; the revocation order was decided upon on the twenty-first, which was surely more than a coincidence.³ Now that the four points were agreed upon by all the belligerents, the mobilisation had served its purpose. By cancelling her warlike preparations, Austria gave a lead to the other powers: the winter should be given over to negotiation, and peace might be achieved before the spring.

During this same month of November the confused diplomacy of the *Bund* powers was at last reaching some sort of climax. The problem was whether Austria was going to be drawn into the Anglo-French camp and thus accomplish a diplomatic revolution, or whether she was going to be persuaded into a central neutrality by the German states and perhaps (when the war was over) be drawn back into a renewed Holy Alliance. Austria dared not go too far without some guarantee of a benevolently neutral Prussia, and, since the treaty of 20 April, Prussia had refused to give her further assurances. Austria's object was to obtain at least the protection by Prussia and the *Bund* of the Austrian occupation of the Principalities. On 9 November the Vienna cabinet assured Prussia that no compact would be made with the Western powers without her knowledge: Prussia would not again, as on 8 August, be presented with a *fait accompli*.⁴

¹ Cipher telegram, F.O. 7/438, received 8 a.m., 21 November 1854.

² Friedjung, pp. 115-7.

³ Friedjung's interpretation is that Franz Josef, confronted with the prospect of war with Russia, recoiled and discontinued the mobilisation. This hardly holds water, for by 21 November the prospect was negotiation, not war.

⁴ Friedjung, p. 120. This promise was rudely broken a few weeks later. The Prussian government was indeed informed by Buol of the intention of

On 26 November the negotiation was successfully concluded. Prussia guaranteed the Austrian troops in the Principalities against attack and agreed to support the Austrian propositions in the Frankfurt Diet.¹ Prussia hoped that she might inveigle Austria into a compromising position towards the Western powers and it will be seen that the Prussian calculation was nearly correct. In any event, these strong crosscurrents vitally affected the negotiations for a tripartite treaty that were now proceeding.

It has been seen that the draft provisionally agreed upon between Paris and London had been sent to Vienna from those capitals on 6 and 7 November, respectively. On 13 November the allied ambassadors waited upon Buol, whose various amendments led him to draw up a new draft.² There were two important alterations. Article V now declared that if peace on the basis of the four points had not been assured 'dans le cours de la presente année' (instead of 'au mois d'avril prochain'), the signatories 'délibéreront sans retard sur les moyens les plus efficaces pour obtenir l'objet de leur alliance'. The article meant, to Buol, the opening of conferences on the four points—hence, the sooner they started the better. Buol also added a secret article stating that if peace were not restored by January, military conversations should at once be opened between the signatories. By these two modifications Buol considered himself to have given Austria an excellent position for either eventuality, peace or war. The French put strong pressure upon the British ministers to accept the revised draft treaty immediately. They hesitated;³ but they were in no position to reject it, Austria to sign a treaty, 'but it is at the same time stated that no objection on their part will arrest or change the decision taken in Vienna' (cipher telegram, Westmorland to Clarendon, 29 November 1854: F.O. 7/438).

¹ Hübner, i. 281.

² Westmorland to Clarendon, 15 November 1854, no. 432: F.O. 7/437.

³ Strangely enough, Palmerston was in favour of the treaty. On 19 November he was in Paris and had to some degree taken on the colour of his surroundings (copy, Palmerston to Clarendon, 19 November 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 19). But on the same day Aberdeen wrote to Clarendon that 'this extraordinary haste has rather the appearance on our part of a trick and

whatever their opinion of it. News from the Crimea was more and more disheartening. At Inkerman (5 November) the allies had been within an ace of being thrust into the sea. It was in an atmosphere of misery and gloom that the British cabinet met to consider Buol's draft,¹ and it is not surprising therefore, that it was accepted. In a dispatch dated 22 November Clarendon authorised Westmorland to sign the tripartite treaty.²

The Austrian counter project had been put forward in proper order by Buol and had been duly accepted in Paris and London. There was still, however, a final struggle before Franz Josef was convinced that Austria's interests demanded a Western alliance. Russia's adhesion to the four points and Prussia's readiness to extend the treaty of 20 April made the policy of a strong central neutrality very attractive. The struggle of influences in the Austrian cabinet seems to have reached a climax in meetings held on 17 and 19 November. Kübeck declared that 'at the meeting of 17 November only General Hess and myself pointed out the necessity for peace; Count Buol and Bach hurled spears and arrows against Russia. The Emperor did not then express his opinion'.³ Evidence of these important meetings is very scanty.⁴ Apparently even on 19 November Franz Josef did not deliver his final judgment. Ultimately the forces in favour of the signature of a treaty proved the stronger. Buol felt him-

bad faith in dealing with the engagement' (Clarendon Papers). On the twentieth Clarendon wrote to the Queen that he thought that 'Austria is not sincere in this matter, and that the treaty will neither afford assistance nor be a cause of satisfaction to us' (*Royal Archives*, G. 19).

¹ Lady Clarendon noted on 18 November: 'The reports in London are horrid. It is useless to record what is dreadful and may turn out not true, as it is not known officially, so I will not record these rumours' (Sir Herbert Maxwell, *The Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon*, London, 1913, ii. 50-1).

² No. 373, F.O. 7/430.

³ 16 December 1854: *Das Tagebuch des Polizeiministers Kempen von 1848 bis 1859*, ed. by Josef Karl Mayr (Vienna, 1931).

⁴ No 'Ministerprotokoll' exists for either of the meetings. Friedjung (pp. 114-5) learned of them from the papers of Bach. See Kempen's *Tagebuch*, p. 348. n.

self so deeply committed that if the treaty were now refused, he would be forced to resign. Bourqueney and Westmorland used the strongest language.¹ On 29 November Westmorland was able to telegraph that the treaty was accepted, and on 2 December it was signed in due form by the plenipotentiaries of Austria, France, and Britain.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TREATY

The critical articles of the treaty were Articles I and V.² Article I declared that the signatories confirmed the four points and reserved the right to propose further terms. No arrangement was to be entered into with Russia without previous consultation. Article V declared that if, by the end of the year, peace were not assured on the basis of Article I, the signatories would deliberate as to the best means of securing the object of their alliance. It must again be emphasised that when this clause was drafted by the French, the only possible '*moyens les plus efficaces pour obtenir l'objet de leur alliance*' were *warlike measures* doubtless to be preceded by an Austrian ultimatum. By the date of the signature, however, Russia had unconditionally accepted the four points. The object of the alliance was, according to the preamble, '*de mettre fin le plus tôt possible à la guerre actuelle par le rétablissement de la paix générale*', and this object could now obviously be best obtained by negotiation, if all the powers were sincere in their adhesion to the four points. In spite of this article, the British nursed the hope that negotiation might be avoided, and they resisted it to the last. Having been drawn, step by step, first into the exchange of notes of 8 August, then into the treaty of 2 December, many British statesmen refused to concede the full implications of the diplomatic instruments to which they had given their consent. Fundamentally, they had been trying to deceive

¹ There is no evidence that they threatened to demand their passports. See *English Historical Review*, April 1935, pp. 377-8.

² The British copy of the treaty is in F.O. 93/5, Austria 29.

Austria by agreeing to projects which they thought would never become operative because of the obstinacy of the Russians. When the Russians proved unexpectedly conciliatory, and the measures concerted with Austria became operative in the sense of negotiation, several of the ministers obscurely felt that they had been deceived, which really meant that they had failed to deceive. On the whole, in Britain the treaty was regarded with impatience; while Sebastopol remained untaken, all else could wait.

In France, on the contrary, news of the signature of the tripartite treaty was received with acclamation. On 2 December there had been gloom at the Tuileries over dinner, and Napoleon III was especially dispirited. 'Mais lorsqu'en se levant de table il reçut la nouvelle si impatiemment attendue de Vienne, il perdit toute contenance, courut à l'Impératrice, l'embrassa, et la tint longtemps serrée sur son cœur.'¹ Westmorland wrote that 'my friend Bourqueney has been lauded to the skies for his part in the work, and he has been decorated with the highest mark of favour that could be bestowed upon him, the grand Cordon of the Legion d'Honneur'.² This ebullition of joy, so different from the British reaction to the treaty, had its origin in the desire, deep-rooted in every Frenchman, to overturn the 1815 settlement. France was now achieving her object, namely 'to put an end to the Northern Coalition, the main object of which, since 1815, has been to hold France in check'.³ 'Politiquement, militairement, le traité du 2 décembre renverse tout et révèle un nouvel horizon', wrote Benedetti. 'Vous aviez blessé à mort la Sainte-Alliance; vous venez de la mettre en terre, avec enterrement de première

¹ Hübner, i. 284. The French were delighted in spite of the fact that they had to promise more than the British to secure the treaty. A separate Franco-Austrian convention was signed, guaranteeing the Austrian position in Italy during the war. It is clear that the Austrians would not have signed the tripartite treaty without this corollary.

² Copy, Westmorland to Clarendon, 13 December 1854: *Royal Archives*, G. 21.

³ Cowley to Clarendon, 4 December 1854, no. 1459: F.O. 27/1027.

classe.'¹ Napoleon might well embrace his beautiful Empress, Bourqueney revel in his Grand Gordon, and Benedetti indite his paean of victory: the glories of the Second Empire were as yet undimmed, and an epoch was opening in which France might again be Napoleonic. France had at last accomplished the desired diplomatic revolution, had at last broken the bonds of that system of alliances that had fettered her since Waterloo. Benedetti lived to interview William of Prussia at Ems; Napoleon lived to give up his sword at Sedan; Bourqueney, more fortunate than either, died before the fatal year 1870 dawned.

In Austria public opinion was strongly in favour of the treaty of 2 December. Bach, who was a strong supporter of the Western alliance, influenced the press in that direction. 'The Austrian policy of those days appears to me almost incredible,' wrote Beust. 'If anything could make one judge it leniently, it would be the fact that the Vienna newspapers were full of enthusiasm in its praise.'² The policy of 2 December was distinctively the policy of Buol and Bach. The powerful Russophil party was disgusted; the 'pan-German' party resented the abandonment of Prussia; even the supporters of the Western alliance frequently thought that the treaty did not go far enough. To Hübner and Prokesch-Osten the Western alliance meant war, to Buol it meant negotiation, and negotiation which had every hope of success if the powers were honest about the four points. He did not want to enter a war that might develop into a 'war of nationalities', nor did he wish Russia to be so weakened that a severe shock would be given to the balance of power. He sincerely wanted a reasonable peace, a peace that would secure Austria's special interests in the Balkans. But he was a good pupil of Schwarzenberg, who swore that men would marvel at Austria's ingratitude. Austria's special interests were to be guarded by Austria's armed might, not

¹ Benedetti to Thouvenel, 10 December 1854: Louis Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire du Second Empire, 1854-66* (Paris, 1903), pp. 26-7.

² Beust, i. 132.

by a compromise with Russia. This was a question of prestige, not a question of interest, for compromise with Russia was always possible, so long as Panslavism was kept under control. As Beust put it, Nicholas 'was a decided enemy of all Panslavistic aspirations, which can unfortunately not be said of his successor'.¹ It was Austria's own policy of 1854 that roused the Panslav demon, rendered irreconcilable the Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans, and ultimately involved both Habsburg and Romanov in ruin.

Buol's policy had a fatal defect. As the aged Metternich put it at this time: 'The consequences of any and every action are hidden from Count Buol. He sees what is right in front of him; of what is coming, he sees nothing.'² Buol's policy was indeed excellent on the surface, but it was a whited sepulchre. Austria had occupied the Principalities and was openly braving the Russian monster. The Habsburg monarchy was praised almost unanimously in the German press, an experience unique in its annals. Prussia was secured by the engagements of 20 April and 26 November, and Austria was allied to the maritime powers. The war seemed within measurable distance of being ended, but, should Austro-Russian hostilities ensue, powerful support was promised. Finally, Austria was feeling more powerful within herself, and revolution seemed no longer a danger. But though internal revolution seemed far away, another sort of revolution was being carried out by Buol himself—a diplomatic revolution. Buol told Westmorland that 'the revolution (for it is nothing less) which has been accomplished in the alliances of Austria has met with many and powerful opponents among certain ranks of the army, and some portions of the civil administration. . . . The Emperor, who had much to overcome in his own mind, feels indulgent to those who did

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

² Metternich to Kübeck, 9 December 1854: *Metternich und Kubeck; Ein Briefwechsel* (Vienna, 1910, supplementary volume to the *Tagebücher des Karl Friedrich Freiherrn Kübeck von Kúbau*, Vienna, 1909), pp. 190-1. This letter is partly translated in Joseph Redlich, *Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria* (London, 1929), p. 163.

not accept the conversion to this new policy as quickly as he did himself'.¹

Franz Josef's conversion to this new policy became one of his life-long regrets. A British diplomat noted in 1878: 'In youth, the Emperor had a great devotion for the Emperor Nicholas, who certainly saved Hungary for the Austrian monarchy. He often regrets his separation from Russia in 1856, and the imputation of ingratitude then freely made against him.'² Czar Nicholas had indeed regarded Franz Josef with almost paternal affection, and the treaty of 2 December cut him to the quick. He gave vent to his feelings by presenting his valet with a statuette of Franz Josef which had hitherto adorned his study. It is recorded that he asked Esterházy who were the two most foolish kings of Poland and answered that they were John Sobieski and himself, for they had both saved Austria.³ Nicholas died within a few months, and his subjects, who both loved and feared him, felt that Austrian ingratitude had driven him to the grave. Burnaby, who made the famous ride to Khiva twenty years later, recorded: 'During my journey through Russia I was struck by the marked hostility shown by all classes to the Austrians and Germans, the conduct of the former power during the Crimean War having left a very bitter feeling behind it.'⁴ This feeling existed not only throughout Russia but also among friends of Russia in other countries. Salisbury recorded, for example, how in 1876 Bismarck 'related almost with passion the story of how Nicholas interfered in Francis Joseph's behalf to restore him gratis a revolted kingdom, with a chivalry which no other sovereign had ever exhibited before, and how Francis Joseph had repaid him with the ingratitude of 1854.'⁵ Here was a consequence of Buol's diplomatic revolution which he did not foresee. It was

¹ Westmorland to Clarendon, 18 October 1854, no. 393: F.O. 7/437.

² Henry Drummond-Wolff, *Rambling Recollections* (London, 1908), ii. 163.

³ Friedjung, p. 127.

⁴ Fred Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva* (London, 1877), p. 332.

⁵ Salisbury to Beaconsfield, 28 November 1876: Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of the Marquis of Salisbury* (London, 1921), ii. 105.

foreseen by Metternich—hence the aged statesman's gloom, and hence his scathing criticism of Buol. By Buol's policy Austria lost the two allies she had kept almost without intermission since 1815, and she gained no permanent allies in return. It is just possible that a firm alliance with France, such as that envisaged by Drouyn de Lhuys, would have been feasible had another policy been pursued after 2 December 1854; it is possible that in other circumstances Drouyn de Lhuys might have persuaded Napoleon to enter the war of 1866. But at best the Habsburg Monarchy and the Second Empire were an ill-assorted pair. Buol's policy may find some support in the realm of speculation, but in the realm of fact it brought 1859 and 1866 in its train.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF LORD PALMERSTON¹

During the last dozen years, numerous works have appeared bearing on the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston.² Professor H. C. F. Bell has published an admirable biography (*Lord Palmerston*, 2 vols., 1936) which deals with both domestic and foreign affairs. Professor Temperley in his *England and the Near East: the Crimea*

¹ Reprinted from *History*, March 1938 (Historical Revision lxxxiv).

² BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: The Victorian 'official' life is Bulwer and Ashley's *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston* (5 vols., 1870-6). This remains indispensable, but is naturally biased in favour of Palmerston. Other pre-war works illustrating Palmerston's career are Greville's *Journal* (8 vols., 1896), Theodore Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort* (5 vols., 1875-80), Queen Victoria's *Letters* (1st Series 1907, 2nd Series 1926-8), Guizot's *Memoires* (8 vols., 1858-67), Metternich's *Memoires* (8 vols., 1880-4), and Fiquelmont's *Lord Palmerston, l'Angleterre et le Continent* (2 vols., 1852). Since the war, two notable document books have been added, namely, G. P. Gooch, *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell* (2 vols., 1925) and P. Guedalla, *The Palmerston Papers, being the Correspondence of Lord Palmerston with Mr. Gladstone, 1851-65* (1928). An understanding of Palmerston's career is aided by the following recent works, as well as the three mentioned in the text: C. Sproston, *Palmerston and the Hungarian Revolution* (Cambridge, 1919); B. K. Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston* (1924); F. A. Simpson, *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France* (1930); W. L. Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade, 1839-65* (1929); L. Steefel, *The Schleswig-Holstein Question* (Oxford, 1932); and A. J. P. Taylor, *The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy 1847-9* (Manchester 1934). The learned journals have added their quota to the subject, and the following articles may be instanced: F. S. Rodkey, 'Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey' (*Journal of Modern History*, Chicago, 1929) and 'Views of Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834' (*English Historical Review*, 1930), the latter being supplemented by G. H. Bolsover in the same journal in 1936; C. W. Crawley, 'Anglo-Russian Relations, 1815-40' (*Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1929); P. de Barante, 'Les procédés diplomatiques de Palmerston' (*Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 1931); G. B. Henderson, 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell' (*Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1935, see above pp. 23-67); and A. J. P. Taylor, 'European Mediation and the Treaty of Villafranca' (*English Historical Review*, 1936).

(1936) has thrown new light on many transactions in which Palmerston played a part. Professor Webster, in his 'Palmerston, Metternich and the European System' (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xx, 1934) makes an important contribution to an understanding of Palmerston's policy in 1840 and 1841. Though these and other works make a fresh survey of Palmerston's foreign policy desirable, the subject is too large for adequate discussion within the limits of a 'revision'. A brief outline and an indication of broad principles may, however, be practicable.

Between 1830 and 1851 Palmerston was Foreign Secretary almost continuously, save during Peel's ministry of 1841-6. His policy during this period displayed two main tendencies. He was Canning's successor in his distrust of the 'Holy Alliance' powers—Russia, Austria and Prussia. He therefore developed the idea of providing a *counterpoise* to these powers, by an alliance with France and if possible with other states. This idea may be seen in Palmerston's handling of the Belgian question in 1830-1. In October 1830 the King of the United Netherlands, unable to subdue the Belgian revolt, appealed to the Powers for assistance in maintaining the Vienna settlement. By the time that Palmerston became Foreign Secretary, a conference had already met at London, and an armistice had been arranged between the Belgians and the Dutch. Palmerston's viewpoint was fundamentally conservative, and indeed remained so in every crisis that arose during his foreign secretaryship. He confessed that in his opinion the continuance of the union between Belgium and Holland 'would have been most advantageous to the general interests of Europe'. The object of that union had been to restrain France; and Palmerston saw that, if a new settlement was essential, new methods would have to be devised to prevent French aggression in place of the old methods that had broken down. He was willing, therefore, to break the letter of the Treaty of Vienna, in order that the spirit might be preserved. He had no love for the Belgian revolutionaries, and regarded

their hankerings after union with France as exceedingly dangerous. If Russia, Austria and Prussia were to try to re-establish the 1815 settlement, war with France would result. If France tried to seize Belgium, war would again be inevitable. So Palmerston had to prevent both these eventualities. He did so by entering into a new alliance with France, which would at the same time restrain France herself and provide a counterpoise to the Holy Alliance powers.

In this effort Palmerston was successful, aided by the Polish revolution and by the moderation of Louis Philippe. Palmerston certainly cannot be called *le père de la Belgique*, as a Belgian historian enthusiastically proclaimed him. Even from the purely British side, Grey was as much responsible as Palmerston for British foreign policy. Professor Webster writes of Palmerston's 'rashness and immaturity' as late as 1834.¹ The creation of Belgium is indeed an episode highly creditable to British diplomacy, which materially contributed to the avoidance of a European war. Part of the credit was Palmerston's, and his reputation gained greatly from it. But the dramatisation and over-simplification of events, to which both contemporaries and historians are prone, have generally resulted in Palmerston's part being much exaggerated. Palmerston's policy of counterpoise was not always so successful. He pursued this idea even further in the alliance signed in 1834 between Britain, France, Spain and Portugal. Palmerston delightedly asserted that 'it establishes a quadruple alliance among the constitutional states of the West, which will serve as a powerful counterpoise to the Holy Alliance of the East'. Though Palmerston's peninsular policy won some striking successes it was in the long run a failure, and the quadruple treaty came to nothing.

It seems fairly clear, however, that Palmerston's policy of counter-balance was always a *pis-aller*. A division of Europe, on grounds of principle, into two camps, would be a cause of persistent bickering and potential war. The policy of Palmerston had therefore a second tendency, vaguely

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 138.

shadowed forth—he had, indeed, ‘exactly the same plan of making a European centre as Metternich himself.’¹ But the European centre was to be London; and discussions were to take place only where Palmerston could have a dominant voice. Metternich was insistent on Vienna as the European centre; Russia was hostile to the whole idea; and in 1834 Metternich’s project of a four-power pact on the Eastern question broke down. ‘Yet Metternich if seconded in his arbitration aims in 1834, might have averted the dangers which threatened Europe five years later.’² This should be remembered when Palmerston receives well-earned praise for his ‘skill and courage’ in the second Mehemet Ali crisis of 1839-40.³ For, had Palmerston’s policy been different in 1834, the crisis would never have become so dangerous. The two tendencies in Palmerston’s policy were not mutually exclusive, and between 1830 and 1848 it may be defined as follows: to keep Europe at peace by counterbalancing the reactionary powers, or else by fostering discussions between all the powers at a European centre, preferably London. In this there was nothing original and nothing revolutionary.

Both the idea of counterbalance and the idea of a European centre brought Britain into close relations with France. This resulted in the first *entente cordiale*, which was fully accepted by Aberdeen during the years 1841-6—Palmerston’s longest holiday. Louis Philippe, the bourgeois King of France, was detested by Russia, Austria and Prussia, because he had turned a ‘legitimate’ monarch off the throne. He was therefore flung into diplomatic dependence upon Britain, though he repeatedly tried to free himself from this thralldom. Louis Philippe was ruler over the revolutionary power *par excellence*, yet he did not believe the French to be revolutionary at heart. If men’s stomachs are filled, he believed, revolution does not appeal to them; so he set to work to fill the stomachs of the French—and the wealth

¹ C. K. Webster, *loc. cit.*, p. 136.

² Harold Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

³ C. K. Webster, *loc. cit.*, p. 153.

and prosperity of France indeed greatly increased during his reign. Britain, and the whole of Europe, should have been very grateful to Louis Philippe for his efforts to cure his subjects of their revolutionary tendencies. But no effort was made to help Louis Philippe in his task; and Britain, which feared isolation less than her continental neighbour, insisted on predominance in the *entente cordiale*. No concession was made to French feeling in the Belgian question. Palmerston tried to reduce France to a secondary position in the affairs of Spain.¹ He prevented the extension of the French coastline east and west of Algiers.² France was deeply humiliated by the defeat of Mehemet Ali in 1840; and Palmerston made matters worse by inflicting a series of diplomatic pin-pricks in 1841.³ The final breach occurred in 1846 over the Spanish Marriages. A 'fatal mistake' on the part of Palmerston, in writing an impolitic dispatch—duplicity on the part of Guizot, in the hope of scoring 'a resounding triumph for himself and for the Orleans dynasty'⁴—and a decisive rupture had occurred between the liberal powers of the west. Metternich warned Guizot: 'One does not with impunity play little tricks with great countries'. So Guizot discovered to his cost when the Orleans monarchy fell in 1848, with its failures in foreign policy as a major cause of the catastrophe. A convincing defence of Palmerston can be written for every one of the occasions on which he humiliated France; French policy may again and again be proved responsible for its own failures; nevertheless it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Palmerston's policy towards the Orleans monarchy, taken as a whole, was dangerous and unsound. Louis Philippe wished above all to avoid revolution: so did Palmerston, and indeed every statesman in Europe. To achieve this end the Orleans monarchy should have been handled gently, and Palmerston should have had sufficient strength of mind to avoid scoring diplomatic successes at its expense. The Orleanists accused Palmerston of being part-cause of the

¹ *Flem, loc. cit.*, p. 138.

² Harold Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³ *Idem, op. cit.*, pp. 143-4.

⁴ H. C. F. Bell, *op. cit.*, i. 377-9.

revolutions of 1848, and there is something to be said for their point of view.

The revolutions of 1848 presented Palmerston with a series of problems of great complexity. These revolutions may perhaps be regarded as a turning-point in Palmerston's career; for the European system received so grave a shock that Palmerston ultimately became convinced that major changes were likely and necessary. Previously he had been in favour of minor changes only; and during the revolutions themselves his policy remained fundamentally conservative—to preserve the 1815 settlement, as near as possible, by persuading governments to grant concessions sufficient to satisfy the liberals. Palmerston believed Austria to be a European necessity, and did not countenance the separatism of the Hungarians, though he sympathised with their desire for liberal institutions. The revolts in Italy soon convinced him that Austrian rule there was not achieving the purpose, assigned to it in 1815, of checking French aggression, because it led to discontent which gave the French an excuse for intervention: 'Just as in 1830 England—the deviser and upholder of the United Netherlands—had been the first to abandon it, as soon as popular feeling in Belgium turned against it, and called for French assistance; so now in 1848 England was the first to abandon the idea of an Austrian Lombardy, which she had supported in 1815, as soon as popular feeling among the Italians made it insecure.'¹ The British object was therefore to replace the settlement of 1815 with a new buffer state, by adding Lombardy to Sardinia—and thus fulfil the intentions of the Treaty of Vienna, while breaking its provisions. The complete defeat of the Piedmontese at Custoza and Novara took Palmerston by surprise, and he found in Schwarzenberg an Austrian statesman who answered his lectures in kind. He therefore abandoned without deep regret the project of a North Italian kingdom, having achieved his main object of keeping France out of Northern Italy. It is scarcely possible to argue

¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *Italian Problem*, 1847-9, p. 239.

that Palmerston saved Europe from a war, since it seems that France would not have gone to war in any circumstances.¹ But it is clear that Palmerston handled the problem with discretion, and was not the irresponsible firebrand that his continental detractors painted him.

Palmerston's careful handling of the problems of 1848 and 1849 makes it the more strange that he should have committed such great indiscretions during the next two years. This, however, seems typical of him. When questions of the magnitude of Belgium, Mehemet Ali, or Italy arose, Palmerston was sobered into common sense, and used his great abilities to good purpose. When minor questions emerged he was apt to give full rein to his unruly nature and drive British policy into dangerous paths. The famous Don Pacifico case provides an example of Palmerston's methods. In 1849 the British fleet was cruising in Turkish waters, on the important task of protecting Turkey from the overbearing demands of Russia and Austria, who wanted Hungarian refugees to be handed over to them. When this question was satisfactorily settled Palmerston could not resist the temptation to send the fleet on a debt-collecting expedition to Greece. He 'exposed the good name of England and risked a breach with France by using the fleet to bully Greece on behalf of a fraudulent Portuguese Jew Pacifico; technically, as ill-luck would have it, a British subject'.² By this episode Palmerston outraged France, Russia and Austria—not to mention Greece. And, just as Palmerston was prepared to alienate the powers over a diplomatic triviality, so he was prepared to alienate their representatives in London by social trivialities. On more than one occasion there was scarcely a member of the Diplomatic Corps with whom he was on speaking terms. A man who was capable of keeping Queen Victoria waiting for dinner was not a suitable person to maintain social relations with meticulous ambassadors, or diplomatic relations with great powers. Diplomacy largely consists, after all, in a skilful oiling of

¹ *Idem, ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

² F. A. Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

wheels; and Palmerston was often guilty of pouring grit in them.

It was Palmerston's faults of manner and method, more than differences of opinion upon fundamentals of policy, that brought him into conflict with the Crown. For example, Palmerston showed great *sang-froid* when the unpopular Austrian general Haynau was bombarded with bottles and belaboured with brooms by Barclay and Perkin's draymen. His apology to the Austrian Emperor was perfunctory and even offensive; and when the Queen protested, she found that the dispatch had already gone. In 1851 Palmerston was with difficulty restrained from meeting Kossuth, and he received radical deputations who referred to the sovereigns of Austria and Russia as odious and detestable assassins. These indiscretions made Palmerston increasingly unpopular with the Court and the Cabinet—indeed, with all responsible persons. No excuse has ever been found for them, save that Palmerston was Palmerston, and that the bad must be taken with the good. His last indiscretion of 1851—his premature approval of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*—was unpopular with the people as well as with his colleagues and the Court. Lord John Russell jumped at the opportunity of dismissing him.

The general condemnation of Palmerston's approval of the *coup d'état* is especially notable because it was so exceptional. It was precisely on his indiscretions, on his faults of manner and of method, that Palmerston's immense popularity was based. It was the Don Pacifico indiscretion that led to the 'Civis Romanus sum' speech—a resounding triumph in the House and the country, which established him firmly in public estimation. The British public hailed Barclay and Perkins' draymen as heroes, and considered the maltreatment of Haynau one of the greatest British triumphs since Waterloo. The British public considered the radical deputation guilty, not of indiscretion, but of understatement. The more outrageous was Palmerston's behaviour, the more the public delighted in it. In 1857 Palmerston

fought a general election on the subject of the iniquitous proceedings in China of Sir John Bowring, who put himself in the wrong at the beginning of the quarrel and kept himself there steadily throughout its course. Palmerston was returned with an overwhelming majority. His appeal to the popular mind is indeed the most notable thing about him. That was where his strength lay; and his career may in some measure be regarded as one of the results of the Reform Act of 1832. An Austrian view of 1848 was that 'Palmerston is not a statesman in the usual sense of the term; *he is an English party man* (which it is necessary to be in England) who uses foreign affairs to strengthen his position at home'.¹ In Justin McCarthy's opinion, 'Palmerston never really guided, but always followed, the English public, even in foreign affairs.' Nor was his guidance always wise when it was attempted. Professor Temperley writes of public opinion in the 'thirties: 'Even without his stimulation, it would have become violently anti-Russian. Palmerston had deliberately set the mischief afoot.'² It is in this deliberate stimulation of public opinion that Palmerston's responsibility for the Crimean War principally lies. On 5 July 1853 Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, wrote: 'Our pacific policy is at variance with public opinion, so it cannot long be persisted in.' In October he admitted that public opinion was so strong that it could be calmed only by the dispatch of the fleet. The explosion of wrath brought about by the Russian naval victory of Sinope finally made war unavoidable. Many causes for the Crimean War may be adduced—'the deepest cause, however, lay in that simmering cauldron of evil passions in which public opinion is brewed'. In so far as Palmerston had stirred the cauldron, even years earlier, he must bear his share of the responsibility. There is no evidence, however, that he desired war in 1853. At the very end of the year he still thought that Czar Nicholas would

¹ Ficquelmont to Metternich, 25 February 1848: A. J. P. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

² Harold Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

recede before menace; and 'his delusion was shared by others in the Cabinet'.¹ Thus Palmerston stimulated passions that he failed to control, and favoured a policy the consequences of which he did not foresee.

The Crimean War was the result of diplomatic drift and ministerial incompetence. But that did not make it any less popular with the British public. A cry arose that Palmerston was the only man capable of waging the war properly, and of guarding British honour and British interests. Early in 1855 he was swept into the Premiership by a wave of anger against the ministers who had hitherto conducted the war. He had already shown that the conservatism of his foreign policy had been shaken by events, and that he was prepared to countenance considerable changes in the frontiers of Europe. In a memorandum of 19 March 1854 he stated that his *beau idéal* of a revised map of Europe would include a 'substantive Kingdom of Poland', a Lombardy and Venetia freed from Austria, a Finland restored to Sweden and accessions of territory to Prussia and Austria.² Schemes of this sort would involve an immense broadening of the objects of the war. In the diplomacy connected with the war Palmerston frequently showed great intransigence, and was restrained by the Crown and the Cabinet.³ When Sebastopol fell he was prepared to continue the war indefinitely, largely from motives of prestige. In Mr. F. A. Simpson's words, 'it was in this emergency, while matters seemed drifting hopelessly to an indefinite prolongation of the war, that the French Emperor rendered to his country and to Europe what was perhaps the greatest service in the region of mere diplomacy that he ever rendered to either.'⁴ Napoleon brought about peace, though Palmerston bickered about details to the last—long after the Treaty of Paris had actually been

¹ *Idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 344, 357, 372, 382-3.

² G. P. Gooch, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 160-1.

³ See Dr. G. B. Henderson's article 'The Influence of the Crown, 1854-6', *Juridical Review* (Edinburgh), December 1936, reprinted above pp. 68-97.

⁴ F. A. Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

signed.¹ Palmerston's reputation was enhanced by the treaty, but he was himself far from satisfied. He felt that Russia should have been defeated more convincingly. A 'substantive Kingdom of Poland' had not yet been achieved: his *beau idéal* of the European map was as far away as ever.

In 1859, when Palmerston was temporarily out of office, war in Lombardy loomed up between Austria on the one hand, France and Sardinia on the other. Palmerston was still sufficiently conservative in foreign policy to prefer peace to war; but he could not fail to see that war would bring a chance of part at least of his *beau idéal* being achieved. In his own words: 'If this squall blows over, we shall have peace, and that will be one good thing: if war ensues, we shall have Italy freed from the Austrians, and that would be another good thing. In any case we must stand aloof and not engage in the war.'² When Palmerston again became Prime Minister war had broken out. Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone were a pro-Italian triumvirate, opposed to a pro-Austrian Court and aristocracy. They were prepared to give a moral support to Italian aspirations; but Austria was merely to be relieved of the incubus of her Italian possessions, not crushed. Both pro-Italians and pro-Austrians agreed in an invincible distrust of France. But they disagreed on the boundaries to which a new Italian Kingdom might be entitled; and a new conflict between Palmerston and the Court ensued, in which honours were about even. The degree of unification achieved by Italy in 1860 was a source of gratification to Palmerston; but it was due to the military intervention of France rather than to the diplomatic intervention of Britain. France, however, recompensed herself with Nice and Savoy, and thus lost her claim to Italian gratitude. The Italians were therefore anxious to give Britain more than her due for the events of 1859-60—not

¹ Harold Temperley, 'The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and its Execution', *Journal of Modern History* (Chicago), 1932.

² Palmerston to Clarendon, 24 April 1859: Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life and Letters of . . . the Fourth Earl of Clarendon* (2 vols. 1913), vol. ii. p. 184.

from a desire to compliment Britain, but from a feeling of resentment towards the French. The British people, followed by many British historians, saw no reason to refuse the greatness thus thrust upon them: all of which redounded to the greater credit of Palmerston, who won his honours easily and accepted them complacently. Metternich had just been laid in his grave; his system was a thing of the past; and his greatest opponent seemed to bestride the world. But this was Palmerston's last real success in the field of foreign policy.

Part of Palmerston's *beau idéal* had been attained in Italy. In 1863 a revolution in Poland made it seem that another part was reaching its fulfilment. British policy, however, proved abortive. A plea in favour of the rebellious Poles met with a snub from Russia; and Napoleon's plan for a Congress was repudiated in terms that he did not easily forgive.¹ When the Schleswig-Holstein affair arose, Palmerston sympathised with Denmark and made his famous boast in the House that if violence were used against her 'those who made the attempt would find in the result that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend'. He would have done well to remember Canning's warning: 'A menace which is not intended to be executed is an engine which Great Britain should never condescend to employ.' In the event, Austria and Prussia crushed Denmark, and Britain did nothing, though the Danes had been encouraged by Palmerston's attitude. Nor was there the excuse, valid in the case of Poland, that Britain had no means of action. In no war could Britain have intervened with greater effect, had she desired to do so. But no British interest was involved. Palmerston found insufficient support in the Cabinet, and the Danes were overwhelmed. In this miserable fashion did Palmerston's foreign policy end—his old world crumbling around him, and the new star of Bismarck rising in the firmament. Politically he was still triumphant, and he won another general election just before his death in 1865. But diplomatically his failure seemed complete, and the voice of

¹ H. C. F. Bell, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 351.

Britain of smaller account in the affairs of Europe than ever before in his career.

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This brief survey of Palmerston's foreign policy may supply the background for an attempt to estimate its significance. It is not sufficient to say: 'No man controls the foreign policy of a country for nearly thirty years and lives to see himself a parliamentary dictator . . . merely because he has a ready wit and a thick skin; Palmerston was the hero of England because he deserved to be.'¹ This implies an adherence to the philosophy of the Cardinal de Retz: 'Success justifies and consecrates everything that is lofty and daring.' It may be the primary function of the historian to describe, not to judge: but, if judge he must, it should be by standards other than these. Palmerston, in controlling British foreign policy for some thirty years, had the opportunity of doing enormous good or enormous evil. Perhaps it was easier to do evil than good; for there is a great deal in Nassau William Senior's remark: 'There are, perhaps, no great countries in Europe whose foreign policy during the last two hundred years has not produced, even to themselves, much more harm than good.'² From what principles, if any, did Palmerston's foreign policy spring? Bunsen said of Palmerston 'He has no principles, and he has no heart'. The Duke of Argyll, who knew Palmerston well, commented: 'Palmerston was not, in the ordinary meaning of the word, an unprincipled politician. He was honest in his purposes, and truthful in his prosecution of them. . . . But what Bunsen meant was true—he had no ideals for the future of the world, and had a profound distrust of those who professed to be guided by such ideals.'³ A statesman with principles of a wider sort is accused of being a doctrinaire: a statesman without such principles is accused of being an opportunist.

¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *Italian Problem*, 1847-9, p. 31.

² *Historical and Philosophical Essays* (2 vols., 1865), vol. ii. p. 280.

³ George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll (1823-1900), *Autobiography and Memoirs*, ed. by the Dowager Duchess of Argyll (2 vols., 1906), vol. i. p. 333.

This is at once a dilemma of the statesman in devising a policy, and a dilemma of the historian in assessing a policy. The only compromise is to say that the first-class statesman holds a balance between these two tendencies, and to judge by such a standard. By this standard Palmerston seems to fail. Professor Temperley, contrasting Canning and Palmerston, writes: 'The one took no step without weighing its consequences in relation to the whole, the other proclaimed a principle at the same time as he condoned a breach of it. The one pursued a system until the system broke down or had to be changed, the other was a man of expedients and of the moment. The one adjusted thought to action, the other tended to adjust action to impulse. . . . He (Palmerston) was indeed not a man of principle or system, yet he was a superb opportunist. He excelled in calling 'bluffs' and in making them. It was not the highest statesmanship but it often served.'¹

If any one theme can be detected running through Palmerston's foreign policy, it was a narrow and bigoted desire to enhance Britain's prestige.² In this he was little less than a fanatic. He is not, of course, to be criticised for his guarding of British interests abroad, for this must be one of the functions of any foreign policy. But he interpreted these interests narrowly, for example in his resistance to the Suez Canal scheme. He believed that every foreign country would do well to imitate the British constitution—not only for its own benefit, but for the greater glory of Britain. 'He was too daring in uttering threats of war, too ready sometimes to abandon them, too fond of lecturing foreign powers and of provoking applause from English audiences.'³ When he bullied Greece over Don Pacifico, 'it was because he had persuaded himself in his nationalistic bigotry, that England's prestige required her dictation of a settlement.'⁴ Such a

¹ Harold Temperley, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

² Cf. Professor H. C. F. Bell's final chapter: 'A suggested Interpretation of Palmerston.'

³ Harold Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴ H. C. F. Bell, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 427.

policy could be justified only by success; yet even this poor justification was denied him. Through the failures of his last year or two of office Britain's influence in foreign affairs became less weighty than ever before in his career. He sowed the wind: Gladstone and others reaped the whirlwind. To sum up, Castlereagh was a good European: Gladstone was a good Christian: Palmerston was a good Englishman—working for national ends, and praiseworthy only from national standards. His nationalism was not a principle but a passion, with all the good and all the evil arising from passion. But passion may have generous manifestations; and it was sometimes so with Palmerston. For example, he waged an unremitting war against the Slave Trade, in which he went to immense trouble and frequently sacrificed narrow British interests. He did so out of an honest sympathy with the weak and oppressed, and there is no evidence that his desire for British prestige played a great part in these humanitarian activities.

Since nationalism was the most distinctive feature of Palmerston's policy, it is not surprising that his bitterest enemies were the 'internationalists' and pacifists. There was a well-developed peace movement in Britain in the 'fifties, with Cobden and Bright as its most notable leaders.¹ Gladstone was a partial convert: and the Alabama arbitration, which was highly unpopular in Britain was a triumph for the cause of peace. These apostles of peace had naturally no good to say about Palmerston. Bright called him 'the most unscrupulous and profligate minister this country has had in my time'.² 'Mr. Cobden deliberately declared him to be the worst minister than had ever governed England. At a later period, when Lord Palmerston invited Cobden to take office under him, Cobden referred to what he had said of Palmerston, and gave this as a reason to show the impossibility of his serving such a chief. The good-natured states-

¹ See pp. 123-152.

² 17 December 1857: *The Diaries of John Bright*, ed. R. A. J. Walling (1936), p. 223.

man only smiled, and observed that another public man who had just joined his administration had often said things as hard of him in other days. *Yes*, answered Cobden quietly, *but I meant what I said.*¹ This quarrel, which divided contemporaries, must from its very nature continue to divide historians. But there is perhaps a growing tendency among historians to agree that, though Palmerston must have been a much more pleasant man to know, Cobden and Bright probably had justice on their side.

Palmerston's greatness lies not so much in himself, or in his policy, as in the age which he represented. Never was a foreign minister more fortunate. France had been crushed in 1815, and a European system devised to hold her in check. Germany and Italy were weak and divided. Russia was powerful; but she was land-locked and backward. Britain was the only maritime imperial power—her fleet made her unassailable—she was the workshop of the world and her wealth and prosperity increased daily. In 1840, Britain's mercantile tonnage was 2,768,000, France's only 662,500. By 1870, Britain's tonnage had increased enormously, not only absolutely but relatively. The figure was then 6,804,000, whereas France had a mere 1,226,000. To give another example, 'in 1839, the English textile mills alone used considerably more steam-power than all France used nine years later.'² Britain's power, indeed, did not depend upon the reams of paper issued from the foreign office. It depended upon iron smelted, coal dug and cotton spun—on Britain's man-power, on her ships in every port, on her merchants in the counting-houses of Liverpool and London. Diplomacy has been compared to a paper currency with the actual power of the country playing the part of bullion on which that currency is based. Good diplomacy should prevent the wastefulness of war and excessive armaments, just as currency saves the inconvenience of barter,

¹ Justin McCarthy, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 62-3.

² J. H. Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany*, 1815-1914 (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 63, 112, 356.

and unnecessary transport of bullion. Palmerston was lucky because his diplomatic currency had a sounder basis than that of any of his rivals; and so formidable was Britain in his day that it would have been a bad foreign minister indeed who would not have achieved some notable successes. It was not Palmerston who was great, but Britain; and Britain has never been greater, before or since. Palmerston revelled in that power, and strove to increase it. Sometimes he used it for unworthy objects, or made mountains out of mole-hills, from love of demonstrating Britain's strength. Sometimes he used it to succour oppressed peoples, hunted refugees, or tortured slaves. To Palmerston the sense of power was always more important than the purpose for which that power was being exercised: and contemporaries and posterity, in praising Palmerston, have praised him not for himself but for his incarnation of Britain at her peak of glory.

NAPOLÉON III ET SON PROJET DE VOYAGE EN CRIMÉE (1855)¹

La Gorce a fait remarquer que, pendant la guerre de Crimée, 'on se battait sans trop savoir pourquoi: on ne s'en battait d'ailleurs que mieux'; et il est bien vrai que les buts de la guerre, conçus par les hommes d'État qui la menaient, se modifiaient sans cesse. La querelle des Lieux saints fut au premier plan durant la période qui précéda la guerre: une fois celle-ci commencée, on n'en parla plus guère ou pas du tout. L'arrogante mainmise du tzar sur la Moldavie et la Valachie fut l'une des principales causes de la guerre: mais leur évacuation n'empêcha point l'invasion de la Crimée. Entrées ostensiblement dans la guerre pour soutenir l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Sublime Porte, la France, aussi bien que l'Angleterre, en vint avant la fin des hostilités à considérer son protégé avec mépris, sinon avec inimitié. Cependant, à mesure que les causes immédiates tendaient à se faire oublier, les causes profondes devenaient plus visibles, radicalement différentes pour la France et la Grande-Bretagne, bien qu'elles fussent alliées. La Grande-Bretagne entendait sauvegarder ses intérêts spéciaux dans le Levant, bien plus importants que ceux de la France; et elle prétendait que l'énorme expansion de la Russie depuis l'époque de Pierre le Grand avait renversé l'équilibre des puissances et menaçait la sécurité de l'Europe. Napoléon III voulait rehausser le prestige de sa dynastie et montrer que les temps sans gloire du roi-bourgeois étaient décidément révolus. Il espérait aussi détruire l'alliance de la Russie, de la Prusse et de l'Autriche, qui encerclait la France depuis quarante ans. De ces deux intérêts, l'un était vraiment national, l'autre purement dynastique. Ni l'un ni l'autre

¹ Reprinted from *La Revue Historique*, 1938.

n'avait de rapport direct avec les motifs de la querelle contre la Russie: en fait, Napoléon III profitait de la tourmente européenne pour améliorer la position de sa famille et de son pays.

A la fin de 1854, Napoléon III avait légèrement avancé vers son double but. Les circonstances favorisèrent la tentative française de rupture de la Sainte-Alliance. Au cours de 1853, le tzar Nicolas avait tenu pour évident que l'Autriche, reconnaissante de l'aide qu'il lui avait apportée en 1849 contre la Hongrie rebelle, soutiendrait sa politique dans les Balkans. Mais les Autrichiens ne pouvaient oublier que les Magyars ne s'étaient pas rendus à eux, mais aux Russes; ils ne pouvaient oublier le fameux message de Paskiévitch: 'La Hongrie vaincue gît aux pieds du Tzar.' Aussi maint homme d'État autrichien était-il convaincu qu'il fallait résister aux prétentions de la Russie dans les Balkans, moins pour protéger quelque intérêt spécial de l'Autriche que pour démontrer que l'Autriche ne tombait pas sous la dépendance de la Russie. Telle était la situation dont tirèrent parti Napoléon III et son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Drouyn de Lhuys: cet habile ministre était disposé à coopérer en toute circonstance avec l'empire des Habsbourg: 'La France avec l'Autriche', déclarait-il, 'est une puissance conservatrice; la France en guerre avec l'Autriche est une puissance révolutionnaire. La nation est indifférente.'¹ Une alliance avec l'Autriche aurait encore l'attrait de maintenir la France dans les voies du conservatisme, mais son attrait principal était sans doute qu'elle eût détruit la combinaison anti-française qui, depuis le traité de Chaumont, réduisait la France à l'impuissance. La France fit donc tous ses efforts pour entraîner l'Autriche dans la guerre ou tout au moins dans des démarches qui lui aliéneraient pour de bon la Russie. Il en résulta l'échange de notes du 8 août 1854, où étaient définis les 'quatre points', et le traité du 2 décembre 1854, par lequel, à l'article V, la Grande-Bretagne, la France et

¹ 7 janvier 1854: Hübner, *Neuf ans de souvenirs d'un ambassadeur d'Autriche*, 2 vol., 2^e éd. Paris, 1905-8, t. i, p. 198.

l'Autriche convenaient, si la paix n'était pas intervenue sur ces bases avant la fin de l'année, de se concerter 'sur les moyens les plus efficaces d'atteindre le but de leur alliance'.

Le traité du 2 décembre fut accueilli en France avec joie; mais les difficultés ne faisaient que commencer pour Napoléon III. Les trois signataires du traité n'étaient nullement d'accord sur son sens. La Grande-Bretagne se défiait profondément de l'Autriche, et la perspective de reprendre des négociations à Vienne était loin de la séduire; pour elle, le traité signifiait simplement une légère diminution de l'improbabilité d'une entrée en guerre de l'Autriche. Pour l'Autriche, au contraire, le traité impliquait la reprise de conférences d'où devait sortir la paix. Le point de vue français oscillait entre les deux autres. A vrai dire, la grande affaire de la France était de maintenir la nouvelle alliance, indépendamment des fins que se proposait cette alliance; le traité, symbole de la mort de la Sainte-Alliance, était une fin en soi. Pendant quelque temps, la Grande-Bretagne, aussi bien que la France, fut convaincue que la Russie, en acceptant les 'quatre points', n'était pas sincère et que l'on pourrait éviter des négociations. Les 17 et 18 décembre, la France et la Grande-Bretagne échangèrent des notes aux termes desquelles elles ne devaient point accepter de paix qui ne comportât la démolition de Sébastopol et la limitation à quatre unités de la flotte russe dans la mer Noire. Elles ne mirent pas dans le secret leur alliée l'Autriche, trait d'honnêteté douteuse, mais s'accordèrent avec elle, le 28 décembre, sur une interprétation beaucoup plus modérée du 'troisième point'.¹ Mais, au grand dépit des puissances maritimes, la Russie fit sienne cette interprétation, donnant par là toute sa force logique au point de vue autrichien sur l'article 2 du traité du 2 décembre, à savoir que les négociations étaient le meilleur moyen 'd'atteindre le but de leur alliance', la paix sur la base des quatre points.

Ce bref exposé préliminaire était indispensable à la com-

¹ Voir mon article: 'The Two Interpretations of the Four Points, December 1854' (*English Historical Review*, janvier 1937). See above pp. 98-122.

préhension des circonstances qui amenèrent Napoléon III à concevoir son extraordinaire projet de voyage en Crimée. Quand les gouvernements britanniques et français se trouvèrent acculés, bon gré mal gré, aux négociations, ils firent des efforts désespérés, et d'ailleurs vains, pour sortir de cette situation. Napoléon III se trouva du coup placé devant un embarrassant dilemme, et son embarras se révèle dans ce dialogue qu'il eut le 5 février 1855 avec Hübner, ambassadeur d'Autriche à Paris:

HÜBNER: 'Peut-on raisonnablement attendre de l'Autriche qu'elle déclare la guerre à la Russie, parce que l'Empereur de Russie ne veut pas démolir lui-même sa forteresse et brûler lui-même sa flotte?'

NAPOLÉON: 'Cela est impossible!'

HÜBNER: 'Eh bien, Sire, si cela est impossible, qu'en résulte-t-il, si ce n'est que, dans le cas où de semblables prétentions seraient portées devant la conférence de Vienne, l'Autriche serait forcément séparée de ses alliés?'

NAPOLÉON: 'Mais nous ne ferons pas cette prétention avant d'avoir pris Sébastopol. C'est clair.'¹

La chute de Sébastopol était nécessaire, sans quoi la tradition napoléonienne ne se maintenait pas, l'armée n'était pas satisfaite. D'autre part, on ne pouvait sacrifier l'alliance avec l'Autriche, sans quoi toute la diplomatie des derniers mois était perdue et l'Autriche se laissait peut-être glisser de nouveau dans la Sainte-Alliance redoutée. C'est ici qu'entraient en violent conflit les deux intérêts français déjà signalés, d'une part le prestige de l'armée et de la dynastie, d'autre part l'alliance avec l'Autriche. Car, vers février 1855, le prestige de Napoléon avait sans doute été rehaussé, mais il s'en fallait de beaucoup qu'il le fût assez. Certes, il avait

¹ Hübner à Buol, 10 février 1855, n^o 18 A-I: Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix, fasc. 48: Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienne (désormais désigné par 'Vienne').—Noter que, si Hübner parle de la démolition de Sébastopol et de la destruction de la flotte russe, il sait seulement que c'est là une aspiration des Puissances maritimes. Il ne sait pas que, les 17 et 19 décembre, elles ont pris entre elles à ce sujet un engagement formel, qui, maintenant, rendrait dérisoire la reprise des conférences de Vienne.

défié le redoutable Nicolas et, tout parvenu qu'il fût, avait contracté une alliance avec le couronne britannique. L'Alma, Balaklava, Inkermann étaient d'éclatantes victoires, et l'armée française n'avait pas souffert, à beaucoup près, autant que l'armée britannique des rigueurs de l'hiver criméen. Mais la défense de Todleben dans Sébastopol narguait toujours les forces alliées, et l'héroïsme des Russes assiégés compensait leurs défaites en rase campagne. Tous les yeux, dans tous les pays en guerre, étaient fixés sur la ville convoitée; et le prestige russe était aussi intéressé à sa résistance que le prestige franco-britannique à sa conquête. Mais Napoléon ne comprit pas que la France n'était pas le seul pays qui eût un 'honneur militaire' à défendre. Pourtant, selon la remarque pénétrante de Thiers, 'il se peut que, lorsque la paix sera possible pour nous, elle ne le soit plus pour les Russes'.¹ Mais Napoléon ne s'embarrassait point de telles vétilles. A ses yeux, la prise de Sébastopol apparaissait comme la seule chose nécessaire: ce point acquis, son prestige dynastique se trouvait rehaussé, son alliance avec l'Autriche assurée, et il pouvait signer la paix, la conscience tranquille.

Déjà Buol insistait vivement pour une reprise des conférences.² Il n'y avait qu'un moyen de sortir de cette impasse: il fallait faire traîner les négociations de Vienne assez longtemps pour que la chute de Sébastopol intervînt avant toute décision. Drouyn, sans perdre de temps, développa ce plan machiavélique devant le gouvernement britannique, 'sugérant que les négociations, si l'on y entrait, pourraient aisément se prolonger, de manière à gagner du temps, et que dans l'intervalle on fît effort pour porter en Crimée un coup décisif'.³ Ce plan ne sourit pas aux ministres britanniques;

¹ Thiers à Hayward, 19 février 1855: H. E. Carlisle, éd., *A Selection from the Correspondence of Abraham Hayward from 1834 to 1884*, 2 vol., London, 1886, t. i., p. 246.

² Cowley à Clarendon, 4 février 1855, no. 126: Public Record Office, London: Foreign Office 27/1062 (désormais désigné par F.O.).

³ Cowley à Clarendon, 7 février 1855, n° 143: F.O. 27/1063. Voir Drouyn de Lhuys à Walewski, 8 février, 1855, n° 29: F.O. 27/1092 pour y lire le même plan sous la plume même de Drouyn.

mais Drouyn s'y tint fermement et Bourqueney, ambassadeur de France à Vienne, reçut des instructions dans ce sens. Au cours d'une conversation avec l'ambassadeur d'Angleterre, Westmorland, il lui dit que '*son gouvernement* n'était pas disposé pour l'instant à faire la paix'. Il s'en doutait depuis longtemps, mais venait d'en recevoir la confirmation très confidentielle. Il voulait dire que l'Empereur ne pouvait pas, sans un grand succès militaire, ramener son armée en France et que, par conséquent, jusqu'à la prise de Sébastopol, et malgré l'ouverture des négociations, aucune paix n'était possible. L'ouverture des négociations, selon M. de Bourqueney, se fait 'seulement pour montrer un vernis à l'Europe'.¹ Cette communication troubla beaucoup Westmorland, surtout quand Bourqueney détailla tout un programme de retards à apporter à la conférence annoncée. Les preuves ne manquent pas de la politique extraordinaire avec laquelle Napoléon aborda les conférences de Vienne, et sa préoccupation de l' 'honneur militaire' semble lui avoir fait oublier qu'il existe aussi un honneur en diplomatie. Mais Napoléon n'était pas, de son naturel, dépourvu d'honneur, et cette situation le torturait. Il souhaitait avec ferveur l'alliance autrichienne, il était donc dans l'obligation de négocier à Vienne; mais il se figurait que 'l'Autriche attend avec une secrète satisfaction de nous voir paralysés en Crimée et il est, en conséquence, décidé à sortir de cette impasse'.² Il se résolut à trancher le nœud gordien dans un style caractéristiquement napoléonien: il allait se rendre en Crimée et s'emparer lui-même de Sébastopol.

Bien avant cette date, Napoléon semble avoir pesé la possibilité de mener ses propres troupes à la bataille, comme son oncle. Dès juillet 1854, on avait remarqué cette phrase dans son allocution aux forces expéditionnaires de la mer

¹ (Copie.) Westmorland to Clarendon, 28 février 1855: *Royal Archives, Windsor Castle*, G. 25. Je désire exprimer toute ma gratitude pour la gracieuse permission que m'a octroyée S.M. le Roi d'utiliser des matériaux inédits tirés des Archives royales.

² (Copie.) Cowley à Clarendon, 8 mars 1855: *Royal Archives*, G. 26.

Baltique: 'Et moi, que des devoirs impérieux retiennent *encore* loin des événements'. Platen-Hallremund, envoyé du Hanovre, fait ce commentaire: 'L'on a dû se demander si l'intention de Sa Majesté pourrait être de prendre Elle-même plus tard le commandement de ses armées.'¹ Mais, malgré ces premières rumeurs, l'idée ne prit réellement forme qu'en février 1855, où il proclama son intention arrêtée de prendre en personne la tête de son armée de Crimée. Vers le milieu du mois, le bruit en devint si persistant et si fondé que les diplomates durent y prêter attention. Seebach, ministre de Saxe, signala à son gouvernement, le 15 février, que plus d'une semaine auparavant il avait été informé du projet criméen, 'sous le sceau du secret', par un intime de l'Empereur (peut-être Morny). Cette lettre prouve que ces rumeurs avaient attiré l'attention des spéculateurs aussi bien que des diplomates: 'J'avoue que mille raisons me firent taxer ce projet de trop extraordinaire pour y arrêter mon attention, quoique j'appris de source certaine que mon informant avait basé là-dessus une spéculation qui, par la baisse d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, lui rapporte déjà plus de 150,000 francs. Je cite ce chiffre pour donner la mesure de sa confiance. Ce mouvement de la Bourse indique suffisamment comment le public accueille ce bruit dont, malgré la grande consistance qu'il a prise depuis deux jours, tout le monde s'obstine à douter. . . . Lord Cowley affirme positivement ne rien savoir, mais il convient qu'avec l'Empereur il faut s'attendre surtout à l'imprévu, et je suis parfaitement de son avis. Si l'on ne me trompe pas à dessein, l'Impératrice a fait il y a quelques jours des demi-confidences à une personne qu'elle affectionne beaucoup, et qui non seulement indiqueraient que la résolution de l'Empereur est prise, mais qui font encore pressentir qu'Elle l'accompagnerait iusqu'à Constantinople. J'avoue que tous ces projets frisent tellement l'incroyable qu'on hésite à en parler sérieuse-

¹ (Copie.) Platen-Hallermund au ministère des Affaires étrangères de Hanovre, 13 juillet 1854, n° 74: Hannover Staatsarchiv, Hannover (désormais désigné par 'Hannover'), 9 Türkei, n° 27 E.

ment, mais, encore une fois, avec l'Empereur tout est possible.'¹

Le 16 février, Cowley, ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne, en dépit de son incrédulité première, fut contraint d'attirer sur ces rumeurs l'attention de son gouvernement.² Le même jour, la princesse Mathilde trouva son impérial cousin obstinément fidèle à son idée. A tous les arguments, 'il a répondu que la prise de Sébastopol annoncerait la paix, et qu'il fallait prendre Sébastopol'.³ Le 27 février, Palmerston reçut de Napoléon une lettre où tout le plan était tracé dans ses grandes lignes. Il se proposait de chasser les Russes de Crimée avec une armée de 77,000 Français et Sardes, tandis que 66,000 Français, Britanniques et Turcs maintiendraient le siège devant Sébastopol. Quand l'armée des Russes en campagne serait défaite, il se replierait et prendrait Sébastopol. Palmerston ajouta ce commentaire: 'Que l'opération militaire soit ou non jugée praticable et expédiente, la présence de l'Empereur en Crimée semble ne répondre à absolument aucune nécessité et pourrait entraîner les plus déplorables conséquences.'⁴ On va voir que cette opinion de Palmerston était presque unanimement partagée, en France et en Grande-Bretagne.

L'Impératrice, incurablement romanesque, encourageait son époux dans cette folie: mais il ne trouva point d'autre appui. A vrai dire, l'instinct poétique de Lamartine le portait à considérer le projet comme 'noble et grand'; et Berryer disait que c'était 'une pensée digne d'un prince français'.⁵ Mais c'étaient là des opinions sentimentales—et la raison de la France entière se récriait contre l'aventure. 'La vie de l'Empereur est notre vie,' s'écriait Vielcastel; 'après lui,

¹ Seebach à Beust, xii, 15 février 1855: Sächsische Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden (désormais désigné par 'Dresden'), Ausw. Min. Repos. 29, n° 9: Paris, 1855.

² Cowley à Clarendon, 16 février 1855, n° 190: F.O. 27/1063.

³ *Mémoires du comte Horace de Vielcastel sur le règne de Napoléon III*, 1851-1864, avec une préface de L. Léouzon-Leduc, 6 vol., Paris, 1883, t. iii, p. 112.

⁴ Palmerston à la reine, 27 février 1855: *Royal Archives*, A. 24.

⁵ Vielcastel, *Mémoires*, t. iii, p. 120.

nous retomberions dans une effroyable anarchie.¹ Quand tout le monde se mit à parler des projets de l'Empereur, la rente baissa considérablement; Paris fut agité et la province inquiète.² Les ministres étaient affolés. L'Empereur était indispensable en France, où, lui parti, Jérôme et le prince Napoléon ne cesseraient d'intriguer. Une fois en Crimée, il n'en pouvait plus revenir sans la victoire, qui pouvait se faire attendre bien des mois. L'armée ne serait pas contente de l'intrusion d'un empereur à qui elle était dévouée, mais qu'elle regardait comme un civil. Persigny, si justement défini par Granville comme 'le plus intime et le plus dévoué des amis civils' de Napoléon, était ouvertement d'avis que son maître, 'tant par sa répugnance à consulter autrui que par son habitude de remettre les choses au lendemain, et aussi son ignorance, est incapable de s'assimiler les faits et d'ordonner les détails nécessaires à la réussite d'un vaste plan'.³ Mais, malgré la pression de tous ses ministres, Napoléon s'entêtait. On peut juger de l'état d'esprit de ce milieu d'après la crainte, chez les adversaires du régime, que la disparition prématurée de Napoléon n'aboutît à l'anarchie.⁴ Les ministres et l'entourage de Napoléon—ceux qui maintenant détenaient places et appointements enviables—

¹ *Ibid.*, t. iii, p. 116.

² F. A. Simpson, *Louis Napoléon and the recovery of France*, 1848-56, 2^e éd. Londres, 1930, p. 287. M. Simpson fait un excellent exposé du projet de voyage de Napoléon, mais il ne s'intéresse pas aux conséquences diplomatiques. Le vicomte de Guichen, que ces subtilités intéressent, se contente de la phrase suivante: 'Dans certaines cours secondaires et notamment en Saxe, il était question de la possibilité d'un voyage de l'empereur Napoléon en Crimée, ce qu'on redoutait fort, par crainte, en l'absence de son souverain, d'un mouvement social en France.' Guichen, *La guerre de Crimée, 1854-1856, et l'attitude des puissances européennes*. Paris, 1936, p. 256.

³ Brouillon de lettre particulière de Granville au prince Albert, 16 avril 1855: Private Granville Papers, Public Record Office, Gifts & Deposits, 29, Box 18.

⁴ Tocqueville s'exprimait ainsi sur le projet criméen: 'Nous sentons que pour le moment sa vie nous est nécessaire, et nous sentons qu'il serait exposé à de nombreux périls.' M. C. M. Simpson, éd. *Correspondence and conversations of Alexis de Tocqueville with Nassau William Senior, from 1834 to 1859*, 2 vol. London, 1872, t. i, p. 96.

seraient aussi les premières victimes d'une telle anarchie. Ils y perdraient à coup sûr leurs biens, peut-être même la vie. Aussi, de tous ceux qu'inquiétait le projet, nul n'avait lieu d'être plus inquiet que les complices du coup d'État, leurs protégés et leur clientèle: tous étaient plongés 'dans la perplexité et les angoisses de l'incertitude'.¹

Pour diverses raisons, les ministres britanniques étaient presque aussi consternés que les Français. *D'abord*, ils sentaient (non sans bonnes raisons) que la Grande-Bretagne était moins l'alliée de la France que de Napoléon III. L'alliance britannique ne fut jamais populaire en France. Et même, 'pendant toute la durée de la guerre, les neuf dixièmes des Français instruits soutenaient ouvertement que la France tirait les marrons du feu pour l'Angleterre'.² Avant même que la guerre fût déclarée, Cowley écrivait: 'Vous ne vous figurez pas à quel point le courant de l'opinion publique coule ici contre nous, gagnant jusqu'à l'entourage de l'Empereur. Qu'est-ce que nous avons à faire avec une alliance anglaise? Elle nous a toujours apporté "du malheur": voilà ce que l'on entend dans toutes les bouches.'³ Cowley répétait sans cesse que seul Napoléon lui-même était vraiment l'ami de la Grande-Bretagne: dès lors, sa maladie ou sa mort en Crimée serait un complet désastre, entraînant la maladie ou la mort de l'alliance. Même s'il ne survenait point une telle tragédie, toute perte de prestige subie par Napoléon chez lui entraînerait l'affaiblissement de sa position, et donc de l'alliance. *En second lieu*, il n'échappait pas aux ministres britanniques que, dans le plan de campagne de Napoléon, l'armée britannique jouait un rôle des plus subordonnés. Clarendon, ministre des Affaires étrangères, dit carrément à Napoléon que, 's'il était dans ses intentions que les Anglais ne dussent servir que de porteurs, ou qu'ils fussent tout au

¹ Seebach à Beust, xv, 24 février 1855: Dresden, Ausw. Min. Repos. 29, n° 9; Paris, 1855.

² [A. D. Vandam], *An Englishman in Paris*, 2 vol. London, 1892, t. ii, p. 163 (publié sans nom d'auteur).

³ Cowley à Clarendon, 28 janvier 1854: F. A. Wellesley, *The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire*, London, 1928, p. 39.

plus regardés comme bons à pourrir dans les tranchées, tandis que les seuls Français s'arrogeraient l'honneur et la gloire de la nouvelle campagne, il en naîtrait des sentiments avec lesquels l'alliance ne pourrait coexister un seul jour'.¹

En troisième lieu, les ministres britanniques se défiaient non seulement des plans militaires de Napoléon, mais aussi, et plus profondément encore, de ses plans diplomatiques—si on lui offrait l'occasion d'en échafauder. Cette suspicion n'était pas sans fondement. Peu après que fut devenue publique l'idée du projet criméen, Napoléon fit une déclaration au journaliste La Guéronnière: 'Je veux qu'on sache, si je pars, que je vais à Sébastopol chercher la paix et que ce n'est que là qu'elle peut être faite. Les incidents de la campagne y serviront plus que les conférences diplomatiques; et puis, l'empereur Nicolas viendra probablement en Crimée.'² Cowley prévoyait qu'il surgirait de graves difficultés si les deux empereurs se trouvaient ensemble en Crimée; et, quand il fut convaincu qu'il était impossible de dissuader Napoléon, il demanda la permission de l'accompagner. 'Si l'on tentait', confiait-il à Clarendon, 'de faire des ouvertures de paix directement à S.M. (à supposer que l'empereur de Russie vienne de son côté), ma présence pourrait lui servir de frein.'³ En fait, à toutes les autres craintes suscitées par le projet aventureux de Napoléon, venait s'ajouter, pour les Anglais, la crainte d'être trahis par leur allié. Honnête dans ses intentions, Napoléon était de tempérament instable: le bien-fondé d'un tel soupçon se vérifia en 1859, où Napoléon trahit la Sardaigne aux négociations de Villafranca, dans des circonstances assez semblables à celles que le cabinet britannique avait maintenant de bonnes raisons d'envisager. L'effet cumulatif de ces considérations sur les ministres britanniques fut de transformer

¹ Memorandum par le Prince Albert, 6 mars 1855: Theodore Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, 5 vols. London, 1877, t. iii, p. 233.

² Vielcastel, *Mémoires*, t. iii, p. 119.

³ Cowley à Clarendon, 28 février 1855: Wellesley, *Paris Embassy*, p. 68. Clarendon accorda à Cowley l'autorisation demandée et Napoléon y acquiesça.

la visite projetée en véritable tragédie et de les amener à faire tous leurs efforts pour l'empêcher.

Cependant que l'on tentait vainement de détourner Napoléon de son projet, le tzar Nicolas de Russie mourut, le 2 mars 1855. Son fils, Alexandre, déclara tout aussitôt qu'il se proposait de poursuivre l'œuvre de son père; et il est évident que le changement de souverain n'eut guère d'effet immédiat sur la politique de la Russie. Mais, en Grande-Bretagne et en France, presque tout le monde s'attendait à un grand changement dans un sens favorable. On faisait la guerre au tzar Nicolas plutôt qu'à la Russie: avec sa mort, le conflit perdait beaucoup de son acuité; la nouvelle provoqua dans le public une joie presque indécente. Plus réservés, les hommes d'État, pour la plupart, croyaient à une amélioration des chances de paix. Pour les ministres de Napoléon, la mort du tzar était surtout une heureuse occasion de détourner l'empereur de se rendre en Crimée. Thouvenel écrivait à Benedetti: 'Mes derniers épanchements ont été lamentables. Aujourd'hui je suis tout rose. C'est ma manière de porter le deuil de l'empereur Nicolas. N'allez pas, cependant, me croire féroce. Je ne souhaitais la mort de personne. Je souhaitais simplement un miracle pouvant empêcher le départ de Napoléon III pour la Crimée. Ce miracle arrive, et je prends mon parti de la forme sous laquelle il se manifeste.' Napoléon avait manifestement une querelle personnelle avec Nicolas depuis que ce dernier avait refusé de l'appeler 'mon bon frère'. Sans que cet incident fût, comme on l'a prétendu, l'une des causes majeures de la guerre de Crimée, l'élément personnel n'en existait pas moins, et la mort de Nicolas le faisait disparaître. En outre, la générosité qui ne fit jamais défaut à Napoléon

¹ Thouvenel à Benedetti, 4 mars 1855: Louis Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire du Second Empire, 1854-1866, d'après les papiers de M. Antoine-Édouard Thouvenel*. Paris, 1903, p. 40. Hatzfeldt signalait à Manteuffel, le 7 mars 1855, que, dès que l'on apprit la mort de Nicolas, 'la voix publique a encore décidé le 3 mars que, comme de raison, il ne pouvait plus être question de l'exécution de ce projet, vu que la paix se ferait maintenant bientôt'. Preussisches Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin-Dahlem (désormais désigné par 'Berlin'), Ausw. Amt. 1 A, Bq. Türkei 44, vol. 25.

le portait à la sympathie pour le nouveau tzar dans sa tâche difficile. Les ministres de l'Empereur comptaient utiliser ces sentiments pour le détourner de son plan. L'attaque de front eût été vaine : Napoléon était résolu au départ, et il n'y avait plus rien à gagner par la discussion. Mais, si l'on pouvait le rallier à une politique de paix, le convaincre de faire réussir la conférence de Vienne, alors on pouvait lui faire remarquer l'inutilité d'un voyage en Crimée. Aussi, pour l'instant, la question de la paix ou de la guerre s'effaça devant la nécessité de faire rester Napoléon en France.

Le 11 mars 1855, Drouyn de Lhuys exposait à Hübner son nouveau point de vue. Jusqu'alors, on l'a vu, Drouyn avait toujours été pour la guerre ; les conférences de Vienne n'étaient là que 'pour montrer un vernis à l'Europe'. Maintenant Drouyn avait tellement changé que Hübner n'en croyait pas ses oreilles. 'Est-ce bien Drouyn de Lhuys qui me parle?', notait-il dans son journal. Hübner savait bien le pourquoi de ce changement de front, 'que les appréhensions que le projet de voyage en Crimée lui avait inspirées et qui disparaîtront naturellement avec le voyage, devenu inutile si les travaux de la conférence de Vienne aboutissent promptement, ne sont pas étrangères à ce revirement'.¹ Drouyn développait un plan bien plus généreux pour la Russie que tout ce qui jusqu'alors était venu des puissances maritimes : ainsi, la Russie, au lieu de n'avoir que quatre vaisseaux, comme le stipulaient les notes franco-anglaises des 17-19 décembre, devait simplement promettre de ne pas *dépasser* son effectif actuel dans la mer Noire. Il présenta ce plan à Napoléon, qui l'approuva à contre-cœur. 'Il n'aime pas', disait Drouyn, 'la solution que nous proposons, mais il est prêt à l'accepter. Il est devenu passivement pacifique. Il ne proposera rien, mais, si d'ici à peu de temps une proposition acceptable arrive de Vienne, il l'acceptera. La conférence peut empêcher le voyage de Crimée, amener un armistice et nous donner la paix.'² Le

¹ Hübner à Buol, 14 mars 1855, n° 31 Litt. C.: Vienne, Pol. Arch. Frankreich ix, fasc. 48.

² Dépêche de Hübner, n° 31 C.

destin des nations, le sort de milliers d'hommes étaient suspendus aux urgentes nécessités des conspirateurs du coup d'État:¹ il fallait faire rester Napoléon en France, afin qu'ils fussent assurés de rester dans leurs prébendes.

Ce nouveau plan signifiait que la France se disposait à trahir son alliée, la Grande-Bretagne. 'Le ministère', écrivait Hübner, 'm'a recommandé itérativement le secret le plus absolu sur l'origine de cette insinuation.'² Sans doute Hübner croyait-il, en tout cas, l'utilité d'être discret: mais s'il eût connu l'existence des notes franco-anglaises des 17-19 décembre 1854, il eût été mieux en mesure d'apprécier les instances de Drouyn de Lhuys. Car le nouveau tournant de la diplomatie française était en complète contradiction avec cet engagement secret envers la Grande-Bretagne. Et même l'échange des notes avait été activé par Cowley précisément pour parer une telle conjoncture: un accord austro-français sur le Troisième Point, interprété moins étroitement que ne le souhaitait la Grande-Bretagne. La précaution, du moins à cette phase, se montra inefficace contre les finesses de Drouyn: car ce diplomate, prompt à s'effacer, informait Hübner que, lorsque le plan serait révélé, 'on voudrait donner à ces propositions l'apparence d'une origine autre que française'.³ Aussi Bourqueney reçut-il, peu après l'ouverture des conférences de Vienne, de nouvelles et fort différentes instructions.⁴ La célérité importait maintenant, autant que la lenteur jusqu'alors: car Napoléon n'avait nullement renoncé à se rendre en Crimée. 'Si le programme n'est pas adopté', écrivait Hübner, 'ou bien que les négociations traînent en longueur, rien et personne n'empêchera

¹ Drouyn était 'fortement travaillé dans le sens de la paix, par Persigny autant que par Morny'. Hübner, *Neufans*, t. i, p. 315.

² Dépêche de Hübner, n° 31 C.

³ Lettre particulière, Hübner à Buol, 16 mars 1855: Vienne, Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix, fasc. 50.

⁴ La conférence s'ouvrit le 15 mars. Drouyn semble avoir écrit à Bourqueney le 16, car sa lettre partit par le même messager que la 'lettre particulière' de Hübner de cette date, et le message n'était là qu' 'en passant', retour de Londres.

l'Empereur de partir. Alors il se jettera, me dit-on, dans une politique de guerre.' ¹ Le 17 mars, Thouvenel, de meilleure humeur, écrivait: 'Il paraît certain maintenant qu'avant de se mettre en route l'Empereur attendra l'issue des négociations qui se poursuivent à Vienne.' ² Pour aboutir à l'abandon, tant souhaité, du projet de Napoléon, il était nécessaire que les conférences de Vienne réussissent, et c'était l'affaire de Drouyn de s'assurer un tel résultat.

Si grand soin que prit Drouyn de cacher sa volte-face aux Anglais, ceux-ci ne tardèrent pas à s'apercevoir de quelque chose: 'Il se fait ici, je le crains, un grand changement,' grommelait Cowley. ³ L'irritation de Clarendon fut sans bornes. 'Les Français ont fait volte-face', écrivait-il. 'Ils ne veulent plus de délais et sont tout prêts à accorder à l'Autriche tout ce qu'elle veut: aussi naviguons-nous entre bien des obstacles.' ⁴ Mais, par bonheur pour la sérénité des ministres britanniques, il surgit bientôt de nouvelles circonstances, par suite desquelles Drouyn fut moins disposé à abandonner son alliée, dans l'espoir de garder l'Empereur en France, loin du danger. Le 13 mars, Walewski, ambassadeur de France à Londres, avait transmis à Napoléon cette déclaration de la reine Victoria: 'Je serais peinée que l'Empereur partît pour la Crimée sans que j'aie eu l'occasion de le voir.' Walewski poursuivait en termes lyriques, disant que la jeune reine se consumait d'impatience à l'idée de rencontrer Napoléon et de lui donner de sa main l'ordre de la Jarretière. Il donnait même à entendre qu'elle lui rendrait sa visite au cours de l'été. ⁵ C'était là une partie du plan britan-

¹ Lettre particulière, Hübner à Buol, 14 mars 1855: Vienne, Pol. Arch. Frankreich, ix, fasc. 50.

² Thouvenel à Benedetti, 17 mars 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, etc., p. 42.

³ (Copie) Cowley à Clarendon, 12 mars 1855: Royal Archives, G. 26. Voir aussi la dépêche de Cowley, n° 299, F.O. 27/1065.

⁴ Clarendon à Aberdeen, 15 mars 1855: *Selections from the Correspondence of George, Earl of Aberdeen* (privately printed, 1885), vol. 1855-62, p. 55.

⁵ Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, etc., pp. 56-7.

nique pour empêcher Napoléon de se rendre en Crimée. Napoléon ne voulait pas encore renoncer à son projet, mais il trouvait difficile de résister aux flatteries de la reine, si agréables au parvenu qu'il était. Aussi, le 24 mars, Thouvenel pouvait-il écrire: 'Les nouvelles que nous attendons de Vienne décideront du départ de l'empereur pour la Crimée. Les préparatifs ne cessent pas. Il serait toutefois question, avant le voyage en Orient, d'en faire un à Londres.'¹ Drouyn de Lhuys était satisfait; sa panique du milieu du mois s'était calmée. Le voyage en Crimée était remis, sinon abandonné, et il se pourrait qu'il fût encore retardé par la venue à Paris de Victoria. Il n'était plus nécessaire qu'il capitulât devant l'Autriche pour arrêter le voyage et la campagne de Crimée. Aussi abandonne-t-il provisoirement le plan d'après lequel la flotte russe devait être limitée aux unités alors à flot. 'Il est riche d'idées et d'expédients, soit dit sans ironie', écrivait Hübner.² En son esprit fertile s'élabora bientôt un autre plan, qui fut finalement adopté au congrès de Paris, le plan de neutralisation. Il n'est pas utile de suivre de près l'imbroglie diplomatique de cette période.³ Qu'il suffise d'indiquer que le plan de neutralisation de Drouyn fut accepté par Londres (30 mars 1855); mais, quand celui-ci le présenta à la conférence de Vienne, les Autrichiens le rejetèrent délibérément. Tous les espoirs de Drouyn se concentraient sur l'alliance autrichienne, et il se replia sur quelque chose d'analogue au plan qu'il avait concerté avec Hübner à la mi-mars 1855. Le 30 avril, il rentrait à Paris, convaincu que l'adoption de son plan apportait la paix à l'Europe.

Pendant l'absence, à Vienne, de Drouyn de Lhuys, les relations franco-anglaises s'améliorèrent beaucoup et l'influence anglaise aux Tuileries devint de première importance.

¹ Thouvenel à Benedetti, 24 mars 1855: Thouvenel, *Pages de l'histoire*, etc., p. 44.

² 25 mars 1855: Hübner, *Neufans*, t. i, p. 317.

³ Voir mon article: 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell' (*Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1935). See above pp. 33-67.

La cause principale de cette nouvelle situation fut le voyage en Angleterre de Napoléon et d'Eugénie.¹ Ils débarquèrent le 16 avril 1855 et, le 18, Napoléon fut décoré de la Jarretière. Le 19, ils furent reçus au Guildhall par la Cité de Londres. Partout la foule les acclamait; partout ils trouvèrent un état d'esprit plus belliqueux que celui qu'ils avaient coutume de rencontrer dans leur pays. On prête à Napoléon ce commentaire: 'J'avais cru que ce bon Drouyn de Lhuys s'était trompé, en affirmant que les Anglais étaient si belliqueux. J'ai voulu voir par moi-même, et malheureusement ce bon Drouyn de Lhuys a raison. Il n'y a rien à faire, on n'est pas allié pour rien . . . , etc.'² Napoléon revint donc de cette grande solennité plus que jamais convaincu de la valeur de l'alliance anglaise et de la politique belliqueuse qu'il était obligé de suivre s'il voulait la conserver. Les visiteurs impériaux prirent congé le 2 avril.

Au cours de cette visite, on fit tous les efforts pour dissuader Napoléon de se rendre en Crimée. Il se montra obstiné; cependant, les arguments semblent avoir eu quelque peu d'effet. A son retour, ses ministres, son entourage rassemblèrent toutes leurs forces et livrèrent un assaut désespéré à sa détermination. Jérôme, oncle de Napoléon, était tout indiqué pour assumer en son absence la charge des affaires: or, Jérôme insistait à présent pour obtenir des pouvoirs plus vastes que ceux que l'Empereur était disposé à lui confier. Les ministres déclarèrent unanimement qu'ils ne voulaient pas être responsables de la paix intérieure en France si Napoléon s'absentait et ils parlaient de démissionner si l'on accordait à Jérôme une autorité considérable. Les finances, lui dit-on, étaient dans le plus périlleux état; la dotation affectée aux opérations de guerre était déjà épuisée. On tira grand parti de ce que le choléra s'était déclaré parmi les troupes françaises en Crimée, car on savait que l'Empereur

¹ On trouvera le détail de cette visite dans Theodore Martin, *Prince Consort*, t. iii, cap. lxii.

² Comte C. F. Vitzthum von Eckstaedt, *St Petersburg and London in the years 1852-1864*, 2 vol. Londres, 1887, t. i, p. 165.

redoutait cette maladie.¹ En outre, la prince Napoléon (surnommé Plon-Plon et, depuis sa visite au théâtre de la guerre, 'craint-plomb') refusa carrément d'accompagner son cousin. L'Empereur ne pouvait tout de même ni l'emmener de force ni, malgré tout, l'interner dans une forteresse, seul autre moyen pour empêcher ses écarts de conduite et faire baisser encore le crédit de la famille. Napoléon n'avait vraiment pas plus de chance avec ses parents qu'avec ses amis. Il tempêta contre les 'poltrons' qui l'entouraient. Il autorisa pleinement la levée d'un emprunt en Angleterre. 'Quel homme extraordinaire!' écrit Cowley. 'Se dresser ainsi, tout seul, contre des intrigues et des difficultés de toutes sortes!'² Mais il avait beau tempêter, il était impuissant. De plus en plus, évidemment, il n'était plus question de son voyage. Le 25 avril, il écrivait à la reine Victoria: 'Je dirai en confidence à Votre Majesté que ma résolution de voyage s'en trouve presque ébranlée. En France, tous ceux qui possèdent sont bien peu courageux.'³ Il arrêta enfin sa décision et, le 26 avril, Cowley pouvait télégraphier à Londres la joyeuse nouvelle.⁴ Dans les cercles politiques, tant en France qu'en Grande-Bretagne, ce fut un immense soulagement.

La Russie s'intéressa peu au projet de Napoléon, sauf dans la mesure où son caractère fantastique apportait la preuve des difficultés vers lesquelles marchaient les puissances maritimes. Mais le chancelier Nesselrode comptait alors parmi les hommes d'État les plus anciens et les plus expérimentés d'Europe; aussi y a-t-il grand intérêt à connaître son opinion sur les motifs qui firent abandonner le projet. D'après Werther, ministre de Prusse à Saint-Pétersbourg, Nessel-

¹ (Copie.) Platen-Hallermund aux Affaires étrangères de Hanovre, 26 avril 1855: n° 36. La dépêche de Platen, n° 37, du 27 avril 1855, annonce l'abandon du projet et en résume excellemment les raisons (Hannover 9 Türkei, n° 27G).

² Wellesley, *Paris Embassy*, p. 73; Vielcastel, *Mémoires*, t. iii, p. 136.

³ *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 1837-1861, 2^e éd., 3 vol. Londres, 1908, t. iii, p. 118.

⁴ Dépêche télégraphique, Cowley à Clarendon, 26 avril 1855, 5 heures après-midi: F.O. 27/1067.

rode pensait que Napoléon n'avait jamais été tout à fait sincère dans son projet. 'Le comte de Nesselrode est au fond tenté du supposer que, malgré tous les vastes préparatifs qui avaient été faits pour accomplir ce projet, il n'avait jamais été irrévocablement arrêté chez l'empereur Louis-Napoléon. Il part du point de vue que l'Empereur des Français a beaucoup trop de perspicacité pour n'avoir pas toujours reconnu les difficultés insurmontables que ce voyage rencontrerait en France, mais qu'il avait cru utile de mettre ce projet en avant, pour occuper l'opinion publique en Europe, pour relever sa prépondérance personnelle en se faisant instamment prier de ne pas quitter la France et, enfin, pour donner une preuve de sa sollicitude à son armée en Crimée'.¹ Ici, comme toujours, le point de vue de Nesselrode mérite considération : en l'occurrence, il est évident que le vieux chancelier était partiellement dans l'erreur. Avant le 26 avril, Napoléon était sans aucun doute absolument décidé à se rendre en Crimée et fut amèrement déçu de ne pouvoir le faire. Mais il n'était certainement pas fermé aux considérations que Nesselrode discernait si clairement. Son prestige personnel se trouva, en effet, grandi—mais au prix d'un déclin de prestige pour son régime, qui dépendait si entièrement de la présence d'un seul homme.

L'abandon du projet de voyage détermina aussitôt un changement de la politique française. Tant que Napoléon eut l'intention de se rendre en Crimée, ses ministres restèrent pacifiques. Le 14 avril, Malmesbury écrivait : 'Les ministres français, alarmés de l'échec du siège, étaient littéralement saisis de panique à l'idée que l'Empereur se rendrait en Crimée. Ils affirmaient ouvertement, ils affirment encore que la Grande Question russe n'est que bagatelle auprès de cette catastrophe, à laquelle *tout* est préférable. Pour l'empêcher, il faut signer n'importe quelle paix'.² Le 26 avril, Napoléon

¹ Rapport politique n° 52, Werther au roi de Prusse, 30 mai 1855: Berlin, Ausw. Amt. I.A.Bq. Türkei 44, vol. 27.

² Malmesbury à Derby, 14 avril 1855: Earl of Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an Ex-minister*, 2 vol. Londres, 1884, t. ii, p. 16.

renonçait à son projet : aussitôt ses ministres devenaient belliqueux. Persigny en faisait l'aveu avec sa brutalité coutumière : il dit à Cowley qu'il n'avait été en faveur de la paix qu'en raison du projet de Napoléon et que maintenant il était en faveur de la guerre.¹ C'est le 30 avril que Drouyn de Lhuys arriva de Vienne, brûlant les étapes ; il rapportait des propositions de paix qu'il tenait pour fort honorables. On se souvient que, six semaines auparavant, Drouyn avait fini par amener l'Empereur à son point de vue : Napoléon, à contre-cœur, était devenu 'passivement pacifique'. Drouyn fit maintenant tous ses efforts pour convertir une fois de plus Napoléon, car les deux hommes avaient pleine conscience de la valeur de l'alliance autrichienne et craignaient de voir l'Autriche passer une fois de plus dans le camp russe si les conférences de Vienne échouaient. Drouyn réussit dans ses efforts, mais ce ne fut pas pour longtemps. Les forces opposées à son projet de paix, et menées par Lord Cowley, étaient extrêmement puissantes. Mais il est bien évident que, si Napoléon n'avait pas renoncé à son projet de voyage, Cowley n'eût pas trouvé le moindre appui auprès des ministres français, qui auraient été unanimes à conseiller l'acceptation. En fait, Drouyn était rentré à Paris quatre jours trop tard. Il n'en livra pas moins un rude combat en faveur de son point de vue ; et, pendant quelques jours, la guerre et la paix furent dans la balance. La crise survint le 4 mai 1855 : ce jour-là, Napoléon prit une décision finale favorable à la poursuite de la guerre, décision sur laquelle pesa fortement l'opinion de Vaillant, ministre de la Guerre, à savoir que l'armée ne serait pas contente des conditions de paix de Drouyn. Si Napoléon avait encore songé à son voyage, l'avis de Vaillant eût-il été le même ? Soldat, il eût peut-être en

¹ Cowley à Clarendon, 11 mai 1855, n° 540 : F.O. 27/1067. Voir aussi lettre particulière, Hatzfeldt à Manteuffel, 9 mai 1855 : post-scriptum, 16 mai 1855 (Berlin, Ausw. Amt. I. A. Bq. Türkei 44, Adhibenda, vol. i). Hatzfeldt ne croyait pas que Persigny eut donné la raison véritable de son changement de front, puisque son langage belliqueux datait du 4 mai plutôt que du 26 avril. Mais, même si l'abandon de son projet par Napoléon n'en était pas l'unique raison, c'en était évidemment la principale.

toute circonstance parlé en soldat : mais, quant aux autres ministres, leur attitude à la plupart ne fait aucun doute : ils auraient insisté de toutes leurs forces en faveur de la paix. Et Drouyn fut si près de l'obtenir, même sans leur appui, que leur attitude eût peut-être été décisive. Au cours de ces journées critiques, du 21 avril au 4 mai, la question de la paix ou de la guerre dépendit du succès des efforts tentés pour dissuader Napoléon de son aventure, bien plus que des mérites intrinsèques du plan rapporté de Vienne par Drouyn.

Il serait difficile de trouver une série d'incidents plus révélateurs de la faiblesse et de l'instabilité essentielles du Second Empire. La Gorce fait ce sage commentaire sur la panique française devant le projet de voyage de Napoléon : 'On vit alors combien, malgré son éclat apparent, était fragile cette dynastie sans postérité. . . . Telle est, même dans les meilleurs jours, l'instabilité des monarchies d'aventure.'¹ Non moins clairement se révèle la fragilité de l'alliance franco-britannique qui fit la guerre de Crimée. Les ministres français étaient prêts, à tout moment, à abandonner leur alliée, au milieu d'une lutte désespérée, pour des raisons que la perspective historique fait paraître vulgaires. Ceci est d'ailleurs vrai, non seulement de l'alliance franco-britannique mais de tout engagement contracté par un tel gouvernement. Cavour en fit l'expérience à Villafranca, Maximilien à Queretaro. Malgré les nombreuses qualités de Napoléon III, un empire exploité par des aventuriers et essentiellement pour eux ne saurait, en fin de compte, réussir ni dans sa politique intérieure ni dans ses relations internationales. La seule surprise du désastre de Sedan, c'est qu'il ait fallu si longtemps pour aboutir au désastre.

¹ La Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire*, 7 vol. Paris, 1894-1905, t. i, p. 364.

PROBLEMS OF NEUTRALITY, 1854:
DOCUMENTS FROM THE HAMBURG
STAATSARCHIV¹

The Crimean War is of considerable significance in the history of international law, since the Declaration of Paris of 1856 went far toward establishing the 'freedom of the seas', for which the United States had fought between 1812 and 1815. At the end of March 1854, France and Britain declared war upon Russia. Britain also announced that no letters of marque would be issued, and that 'free ships' would mean 'free goods', except for contraband. Thus Britain abandoned the theoretical position she had maintained so long, and adopted the more liberal doctrine upheld by states which had not Britain's maritime supremacy. Britain's change of policy, which in March 1854 was stated specifically to be purely for the duration of the war, was made permanent by the Declaration of Paris of 1856. But international law is created by usage, not by declarations. How, then, did Britain actually behave toward neutrals during the Crimean War? Did 'free ships, free goods', mean that a real change of heart had taken place? A good deal of light is thrown on these problems by documents preserved in the Staatsarchiv of the free Hanse city of Hamburg. In Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck politics counted little and commerce everything. Problems of neutrality, which were of comparatively small importance to a great power, were for these trading republics a matter of life and death.

As soon as it became clear that war could not be avoided, Hamburg made unofficial inquiries as to what the policy of the United States was likely to be. Rumpff, the Hanseatic agent in Paris, approached Mason, the United States repre-

¹ Reprinted from the *Journal of Modern History*, June 1938.

sentative in the matter; and on 19 March 1854, Mason wrote Rumpff a letter marked 'unofficial'. He expressed the hope that 'the wise counsels of France shall prevail', and that the self-imposed restraints of the belligerents would prevent difficulties arising with neutrals:

. . . To oppose the strong, who may be disposed to oppress the weak, requires bravery, but to refrain ourselves from oppression, or even extreme exaction, requires yet higher courage. It is on this class of questions that the people of the United States are most sensitive, and I can assure you, without intending any menace, that I would regard the *practical* disregard, in the course of the war, of those principles, in regard to neutral rights, which my Govt has always maintained, in harmony with France, but unhappily not recognised by England, as *certain* to excite the sensibilities of my country and perhaps bring on her the terrible calamity of joining in the war. I hope that there will be no cause of complaint. I found this hope on the long-cherished principles of France, and on that evidence of the dispositions of England to be found in a letter written to me by Mr Buchanan, and on the published speeches of the Queen's Ministers in Parliament, in Galig-nani of the morning. I send you Mr Buchanan's letter for perusal,—please return it.

Why should not the great Maritime Powers avail themselves of the present moment by convention to put an end to private war, ameliorate the Law of Blockade, prevent the interference of citizens or subjects of a country not a party to war taking part under authority from either Belligerent, and to limit the right of search to the only legitimate object of such a forcible right, to the suppression of contraband trade? These ameliorations would make the High Seas, the munificent gift of God to all His creatures, really the lawful Highway of Nations. What honours, to the latest posterity, await him who shall effect this transcendently noble object?

I have no instructions to authorise the proposition of such convention, but I am quite sure that it would be hailed with satisfaction by the Government and people of the United States.

I know the delicacy of the subject, but I hope that everything will be so adjusted in advance before any irritating capture or detention shall have taken place, as to give universal satisfaction. I will be happy to aid you in the attainment of this object, and always ready to converse with the minister, if it be his pleasure to receive me.

The enclosed letter from James Buchanan, the United States minister in London, is dated 18 March 1854. Buchanan was also interested in the problem of neutrality, and wrote: 'I have "on my own hook", and without instructions, been intermeddling in this matter.' He was satisfied with the attitude of Lord Clarendon, the British foreign secretary. Rumpff, Mason, and Buchanan were all well pleased when Great Britain declared her intention of adhering to the French maritime practice of 'free ships, free goods, except contraband'. In a few days, however, events occurred which showed that Britain's change of policy had not really rendered more liberal her treatment of neutral shipping in war-time.

On 7 April 1854, Clarendon wrote a letter to James Colquhoun, the Hanseatic agent and consul-general in London, in which he complained that Hamburg citizens were engaging in contraband trade. On the same day Drouyn de Lhuys, the French foreign minister, made a similar complaint to Rumpff, saying that Lübeck was sending lead, sulphur, and guns to Russia. 'Si tout cela continue', he concluded, 'mon beau rêve de *neutralité* n'ira pas loin.' In order to reassure France and Britain, Hamburg, on 10 April, prohibited all contraband trade; Bremen, on 13 April. The French seem to have been temporarily satisfied, but the British were more tenacious and continued their accusations. In particular, Colonel Hodges, the British agent in Hamburg, was convinced that the Hanse towns were trading in contraband. His protests frequently exceeded the bounds of diplomatic propriety. On 13 April 1854, he wrote to Burgomaster Smidt of Bremen as follows:

Her Majesty's Gov^t having been informed that the transmission of arms and other articles contreband of war has taken place and is about to take place from Belgium and elsewhere to Bremen supposed to be destined for Russia, I have to request that y^r Magnif. will move the Vener. Senate of Bremen to detain all such articles as may arrive there until satisfactory proof has been obtained that they are not destined for Russia.

I cannot for a moment suppose that the Gov^t of Bremen will hesitate to consent to my requisition, more particularly when they take into consideration the very liberal and extensive indulgences granted in this time of war to commerce generally by the governments of England & France; but nevertheless I think it right to observe that should not strict attention be paid to my demand, I have reason to fear that measures may be taken by the two great maritime powers that may cause serious inconvenience to the Gov^t of Bremen as well as to the comēce of that City.

On 14 April, Hodges wrote in almost as peremptory a tone to Syndicus Merck, the Hamburg foreign minister, declaring that the Hamburg prohibition of contraband trade was insufficient because it did not prohibit such trade with neutral states adjoining Russia. This was an extension of the doctrine of 'continuous voyage' to a then unheard-of length. Burgomaster Smidt was able to explain that the arms shipped from Belgium were going to Hanover; and Syndicus Merck pointed out that Hamburg was totally surrounded by the territory of Prussia, a state adjoining Russia. If the allied belligerents wished to stop Prusso-Russian trade, it was Prussia and not Hamburg that should be approached. James Colquhoun took up the matter in London, and had a conversation with Lord Wodehouse, the under-secretary for foreign affairs, which he reported to Syndicus Merck on 20 April:

I began by assuring his Lordship of the bona fides of the Hanse Towns and demonstrating to his Lordship how improbable it was that either of the States I have the honor to represent should incur any risk by countenancing an illegal trade in munitions of war.

I explained to his Lordship that if the prohibition was to extend to the trade with third and non-belligerent states it amounted in fact to an utter prohibition of trade in munitions of war, however innocently.

... I then asked if it was the intention of the British Government to restrict the prohibition to trade in munitions of war to the Hanse Towns only, on account of their geographical position or any other cause, or whether this prohibition was to be extended generally to all Neutrals, such as Belgium, the United States, etc. I had obvious reasons for using the latter as an example. His Lordship declined to

answer these questions orally, declaring them to be of far too grave a description to be disposed of without mature consideration and therefore requested me to put them into writing, at the same time he protested against being bound by any opinion he might incidentally express, in which I could not but concur. At the same time I sought to elicit the general feeling of the Government on the point at issue and it was sufficiently clear to me that the British Government wished to intimate the prudence of the prohibition to trade in munitions of war by the Senate being unexceptional and absolute, for once he implied the possibility of the British Government securing itself by stationing a Ship of War with orders to search all vessels leaving Hanseatic Ports. . . .

James Colquhoun was convinced that the cause of the British government's attitude was the news sent by Colonel Hodges, who was (Colquhoun wrote to Merck on 1 May) 'officially active and somewhat imaginative'. So angry did Colquhoun become with Hodges that on 4 May he addressed a remonstrance to Clarendon on the subject. He explained to Merck on 5 May:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a remonstrance I have felt it my duty to address to the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with a view of *putting a stop*, if possible *in future*, to the *calumnies communicated by Colonel Hodges* to this Government, and which if he disbelieve them, as he states, he ought not to communicate, or if he do, he ought to prove. I shall take an early opportunity of complaining verbally of the pertinacity with which these attacks are renewed, and venture to suggest that I be instructed at my discretion to remonstrate by authority of the Senates against these mischievous and vexatious interferences.

When Hodges heard of the remonstrance, he was much annoyed; and on 20 June he informed Syndicus Curtius of Lübeck that it was written 'in a very discourteous manner' and contained 'extraordinary and unfounded observations'.

The British government soon put into effect its threat to station a steamer at the mouth of the Elbe and to search vessels going up or down. Merck at once wrote to Colqu-

houn, who replied, on 13 May, that it was 'most important to me to know whether hitherto Hamburg vessels only have been detained or those sailing under other Flags equally'. He had no direct complaint to make against Hodges; but 'he has been deceived perhaps not unwillingly by persons of bad faith and low character'. Colquhoun at once sought an interview with Lord Wodehouse, and on 16 May he sent Merck an account of the conversation. Colquhoun began by expressing his surprise at the proceedings of the vessel at the mouth of the Elbe, and said that he hoped that there had been some mistake.

His Lordship assured me at once there was neither mistake nor misconception, that the communications from our side had not been conceived in a conciliatory spirit, that we had shewn a disposition to adhere to the strict letter of the law, and that the British Gov^t was not pleased with the tone Hamburg had adopted in this affair. I answered his Lordship *seriatim*: that with respect to the first every disposition had been shewn to conciliate and act with good faith,—that our proclamations were a proof of this, and that I had been directed by telegraph to transmit copies of the Bonds required by the British Gov^t. I admitted a strict adherence to the letter of the law as the best evidence of the intention to carry such law into effect, but denied it in the sense his Lordship evidently attached to the expression, viz: doing no more than *the letter of the law* required.

I asked his Lordship of which communication of mine he complained; his Lordship interrupted me with the assurance that all my communications had been most courteous and regular but that he had reason to complain of the tone adopted to Her Britannic Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Hamburg. I replied that I remembered no communication with the tone of which the British Gov^t had a right to be dissatisfied, that if this even were so, his Lordship must look to the tone of those which had provoked them,—that our Secretary of State had invariably from compliment to the British Gov^t and to save Colonel Hodges, who was ignorant of German, trouble, addressed that employé in his own language, and that if those communications contained any expressions not idiomatically diplomatic English, that it was unfair to take them *au pied de la lettre*, but that they should in fairness be interpreted according to the spirit, and lastly that even

were this so it was no reason for searching vessels, the British Govt being satisfied of your bona fides and amounted to an aggressive measure utterly unconnected with the question in issue.

His Lordship then shifted his ground seeing the inconsequence of his argument and remarked that a lot of arms had passed through Prussia to the Russian Territory. I replied that it was hard to make us suffer for a want of good faith on the part of Prussia over which we had no control.

His Lordship replied that the British Govt considered all Germany as one country, and that it was for us to take care that one member of the Confederation did not compromise the rest; at the same time he did not wish me to go away with the impression that it was the conduct of Prussia alone which had led to this measure, and concluded by saying that the British Govt was satisfied with the tone of the communications from Bremen [*sic*]¹—that being so near the seat of war it was in our power to trade with the belligerent in warlike stores, if we chose. To which I replied that his Lordship could only intend that remark to apply to Lübeck, with which state he has specially declared himself satisfied, and that Hamburg was situated on the North and not on the Baltic Sea, of which his Lordship appeared not fully aware. His Lordship further said that as Hamburg was in fact the port of Prussia and the most important German port, that Her Majesty's Govt must stop warlike stores getting into Prussia by our Port. I remarked that in such case I presumed Stettin and other Prussian ports in the Baltic had received the same polite attention of a war-steamer as ourselves. To this he made no reply.

His Lordship remarked that Belgium had been threatened with a steamer of observation, indeed I had inferred as much from a conversation I had taken occasion to have with the Belgian minister here. With respect to a remark made by Lord Wodehouse at a former interview, I observed that he was in error in supposing our legitimate trade in arms was inconsiderable; on the contrary our trade in them with transatlantic states, India, China, and the far-East was very considerable.

I entertain the strongest opinion from the general tenor of the conversation and his Lordship's desire to obliterate the impression he had made, by the mention of Prussia, into which he had been betrayed, that we have chiefly to thank Prussia for the measure complained of, and in a secondary degree the agitation and representation of the British¹ Chargé d'Affaires. . . .

Colquhoun obviously could not regard this conversation as satisfactory, and he therefore handed Wodehouse a remonstrance. A fortnight later (27 May) Wodehouse replied:

I am directed by the Earl of Clarendon to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th Inst. remonstrating on the part of the Senate of Hamburg against a British Cruizer stopping vessels passing in and out of the river Elbe, after the assurances which have been given by the Government of Hamburg that they would prevent all trade in contraband of war from their ports.

In reply I am directed to state that the Earl of Clarendon is sure the Senate of Hamburg will admit that the assurances of a Neutral Power that Traffic in Contraband of War would be prevented in the Ports of that Power would not justify a belligerent Power in abstaining from the usual steps to intercept such Traffic, more especially when information had been received that such Traffic would be attempted.

In his covering letter to Merck (29 May 1854) Colquhoun disgustedly commented:

I can only remark upon this letter that I am far from admitting the utterly illogical conclusion at which his Lordship arrives, and can only observe that the intention evidently is to persevere in injustice regardless of logic.

The position therefore was that, only a few weeks after the outbreak of war, Britain was exerting pressure on Hamburg by methods which, if not illegal, were certainly such as would not have been for a moment tolerated by a great neutral power such as the United States. Both Hamburg and the United States were sovereign states—declarations of maritime policy and decisions of prize courts applied equally to both. But Hamburg was not able to protect herself, and Hamburg was a close neighbour of Prussia; so the maritime powers took this opportunity of pointing out to Prussia how easy it would be for them to blockade Stettin and Danzig and Königsberg, and destroy her sea-borne trade entirely. During the first months of the war, therefore—while the

allies still nursed the hope that Prussia might, by menaces, be brought to their side—no opportunity was lost of bullying the Hanse towns. On 3 July 1854, a Russian loan, floated by Stieglitz and Company, was quoted on the Hamburg bourse. The western powers were angry, and Merck did his best to pour oil on troubled waters by writing to Rumpff (4 July):

Malheureusement la cote des fonds et sa publication, qui est uniquement du ressort du Courtiers, ne dépend pas du gouvernement et n'a pas besoin d'une autorisation quelconque de sa part.

Such an argument might carry some weight in democratic Britain, but in dictatorial France it was considered as adding insult to injury. On 7 July Rumpff telegraphed to Merck: 'L'irritation est telle que sans une reponse satisfaisante par telegraphe notre Commerce est sérieusement menacé.' On 10 July Merck was able to reply by telegraph that 'l'emprunt n'est plus coté'. The allied pressure had proved successful.

About the same time that the Russian loan was quoted, the vessel *Césarewitch* (belonging to the Russian-American Company) put in at Hamburg. Since it traded in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, it had a few cannon on board for protection against pirates. Britain and France at once claimed that the vessel should be confiscated—or at least that the cannons should be confiscated. The Hamburg authorities denied that the vessel could be regarded as a privateer, and successfully resisted the allied demand. In November 1854, seven Russian sailors reached Hamburg, having boarded a Hamburg vessel at Hull. Hodges demanded that they should be sent back to England. Syndicus Merck asserted that these seven men had not been treated as prisoners of war in England, and that, in any case, a prisoner of war at once becomes free when he touches neutral soil. The incident was of sufficient importance to be noticed in the *Morning Chronicle* of 27 November. James Colquhoun counselled Merck to continue to stand firm against the demands of the allies, and on 1 December he wrote:

I much question, when one feels to be in the right, the policy of small States yielding to coercion on the part of powerful ones, unless in cases of emergency the fortiter in re may be enforced by the suaviter in modo,—but as it is the practice of strong powers to oppress the weak, it is advisable to let it be distinctly understood that it will not be submitted to and in the present instance the decided refusal to deliver up the sailors in question appears to me to have been in accordance not only with the practice but with the law of nations.

During the remainder of the war, the allied pressure upon Hamburg was somewhat relaxed, apparently because the maritime powers had abandoned hope of securing the aid of Prussia by such methods. But they continued to display their ill will by a spasmodic interference with Hamburg vessels, on the plea of searching for contraband. In fact, a strict interpretation of contraband trade, an extension of the doctrine of 'continuous voyage', and a widespread enforcement of blockades, more than counterbalanced the advantage that had accrued to neutrals by Britain's adoption of the 'free ships, free goods' principle. Britain took away with the left hand what she gave with the right. Her participation in the Declaration of Paris in 1856 therefore did not mean that she really intended to adopt a more lenient policy toward neutrals in future wars. It meant that the experience of the Crimean War had proved to her that she might safely consent to the Declaration without her maritime preponderance being any the less useful to her in the future.

LORD PALMERSTON AND THE SECRET SERVICE FUND¹

When the ferment of 1848 and 1849 died down, political persecution in the kingdom of Naples—as elsewhere—redoubled in intensity. Luigi Settembrini and Silvio Spaventa, founders of the ‘Society of Italian Unity’ were condemned to death. This penalty was afterwards commuted to imprisonment for life in the island of Santo Stefano. Antonio Panizzi, principal librarian at the British Museum, soon interested himself in the fate of these and other political prisoners in Italy. It was probably Panizzi who first drew Gladstone’s attention to their miseries. This resulted in Gladstone’s visiting the prisons, and publishing in pamphlet form his *Two Letters to the Earl of Aberdeen* (1851).

The interest caused by Gladstone’s pamphlet died down—all Britain’s energies became involved in the Crimean war,—and Settembrini and his friends still languished on the island of Santo Stefano. Panizzi, however, did not lose heart; and in 1855 he eagerly embraced a scheme—apparently suggested by Settembrini himself—to rescue the prisoners by means of a vessel to be sent to the island. On 3 August 1855 he wrote:

The affair promises well and the difficulties are enormous, but as I have found money beyond what I had hoped, I am of good courage. . . . The sum needed is enormous, and is required for the chartering of a steamer which is to be found. Time presses. Mr. Gladstone has behaved wonderfully, or properly speaking, Mrs. Gladstone, who has given me £100 of her own, and found £200 more amongst her friends.²

¹ Reprinted from *The English Historical Review*, July 1938.

² Panizzi to Lacaita, 3 August 1855: Louis Fagan, *The Life of Sir Anthony Panizzi* (1880), ii. 132.

Evidence now appears, from the private Clarendon papers,¹ of the somewhat astonishing origin of the 'money beyond what I had hoped'. A large part of the finances for this adventurous expedition came from no less a source than the British government. On 29 July 1855 Palmerston wrote to Clarendon:

Panizzi has a Plan for rescuing six of the King of Naples' State Prisoners, innocent of any Crime, now confined in an Island off the Neapolitan Coast. He is raising a Subscription for the Purpose from private Friends to whom however he merely states that the object is to confer a Benefit on some of these poor People. He has got a Promise of £100 from Each of several Persons but cannot expect to raise enough because the Execution of the Scheme which has been concerted with the Prisoners themselves mainly depends upon sending a small steamer out from this Country to take them off.

Among others whom he applied to was Gladstone who gave his own £100 and promised aid from his Friends, but advised Panizzi to come to me to see whether we could not help him out of S.S.F. How do you stand as to that . . . and could you contribute if necessary £500 or £600 out of that Fund. If we rescued a Prisoner for every £100 we contributed it would not be a bad Employment for the Money, provided you could spare it.

That Clarendon was able to spare the money is proved by a brief note sent to him by Palmerston on 2 August: 'Panizzi is going off immediately. Will you give Directions that he may have the six Hundred which I told him you could contribute.'

Of the moral side of the question it is hardly necessary to speak. That the proceedings of the Neapolitan government were scandalous is undeniable: and that Panizzi and Gladstone, Palmerston and Clarendon were actuated by the highest possible motives goes without saying. Purely as men, they may be at once exonerated, even praised. But the conduct of Palmerston and Clarendon, as prime minister and as foreign minister respectively, does not bear examina-

¹ I am indebted to Lord Clarendon for permission to print extracts from his family papers.

tion. British relations with the Neapolitan government were not good, and by the end of August 1855 they were to become very bad, over the question of the dismissal of the police minister, Mazza. But, at the time when the secret service fund was being used to finance an expedition to rescue state prisoners, an expedition which in certain circumstances might have involved a clash with the Neapolitan authorities, Britain was technically on friendly terms with Naples, and diplomatic relations were unimpaired. It is indeed difficult to conceive a more flagrant violation of the canons of conduct between civilised states.

The project, though bold and ingenious, was unsuccessful. The principal difficulty was to secure a vessel, since all available transports were being used for the Crimean war. In September a steamer, the *Isle of Thanet*, was bought.¹ At the beginning of October it set out for Genoa, where Panizzi awaited it: but it was damaged by a storm and returned to Hull. After repairs it set out again at the end of October, only to be caught in another storm near Yarmouth, and this time totally lost. The project did not recover from this blow, and Settembrini and the other prisoners were not released until 1859.

On 30 March 1861 Nassau William Senior, who was on a visit to Paris, spent the evening at the house of Drouyn de Lhuys, one of the ablest of Napoleon III's ministers, and at that time out of office. The Duke of Castel-Cicala, an ex-vice-roy of Sicily, came in. He declared that until 1860 all had been well in Sicily:

Population, production, and commerce were increasing, when France and England sent Garibaldi to destroy everything—safety, industry, and trade. The lands are uncultivated, the provinces are full of banditti, and men are murdered in the streets of Palermo at midday.

Senior.—What France may have done, I will not conjecture, but Garibaldi was not sent by *us*. We deplored his expedition, believing

¹ For details see Fagan: Constance Brooks, *Antonio Panizzi, Scholar and Patriot* (1931), chap. vi, and G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, chap. iii.

that it would end in the useless sacrifice of brave men, and the disturbance and misery of the country.

Castel-Cicala.—You may have regretted the expedition at that particular time, but your agents had long been preparing the success of such an invasion. I know that English influence, and English intrigue, and English gold, had been squandered for that purpose for years.

Senior.—I feel equally certain that your belief is founded on false information. No English gold could have been so employed, unless the English Foreign Minister took it out of his own pocket. Our secret-service money in time of peace is a mere trifle, and is spent in small pensions, given in return for old services.¹

Castel-Cicala clearly exaggerated. Like most continental conservatives, he considered Palmerston an emissary from the nether regions. But Senior, just as clearly, had no conception of the uses to which British ministers were capable of putting British secret service money.

¹ N. W. Senior, *Conversations with Distinguished Persons during the Second Empire, from 1860 to 1863*, edited by his daughter, M. C. M. Simpson (1880), i. 165.

A PLEA FOR THE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY¹

The so-called 'verdict of history' is continually appealed to in the speeches of statesmen and in the regurgitations of sapient leader-writers. Political parties, like warring nations, assume that 'history' is on their side—just as they assume that God is on their side. This egregious assumption is based on the belief that no 'verdict of history,' no authoritative judgment, is possible for centuries, or at least decades. This delusion has seldom been combated by historians, who have, indeed, played some part in fostering it. But an excellent case may be made out for the study of 'contemporary history'—for the making of at least 'interim judgments', here and now, on matters of urgent and immediate importance. Many sources (especially documentary sources) are not yet accessible to the historian, and will not be for many years. For example, it may be generations before full details are available of the meetings of the French cabinet that led to the armistice with Germany in 1940. Perhaps such details never will be available. But whether or not these details become known in the future, the fact remains that they are details. The essentials of the fall of France are already known, and there is no reason why judgments should not now be made: judgments that will in all probability be confirmed by future research.

I have come to this point of view, not owing to a high opinion of my own judgment or other historians' judgments on contemporary events, but owing to my researches in nineteenth-century history. In the course of these researches

¹ Part of an address to the West of Scotland Branch of the Historical Association (Scotland) reprinted from *History*, June 1941. There is a discussion of this essay by Mr Max Beloff in an article in *History* (March 1945) entitled: 'The Study of Contemporary History. Some Further Reflections.'

I read many articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's*, *Chambers'*, the *Quarterly*, the *Fortnightly*, and others; and I was amazed by the perspicacity and the balanced judgments of intelligent contemporaries. For example, contemporary observers of the Crimean War gave very satisfactory judgments on the causes of the war and the respective responsibilities of the states concerned. The events of the war, and its results, were shrewdly and impartially analysed. Delusions tended to grow later. Kinglake, in his bitter animosity against Louis Napoleon, drew several red herrings across the trail; and fifty years after the fall of Sebastopol the war was interpreted far less satisfactorily than it had been between 1854 and 1856. My researches, I felt, were doing no more than cutting away the rank overgrowth of the 'sixties and 'seventies, and bringing things back—with a little additional information—to what the intelligent contemporary had known.

The historian has undoubted advantages over the contemporary. He has dispatches, cabinet minutes, private letters and memoirs. He has no excuse for not seeing the wood for the trees. But the contemporary has many advantages over the historian. He has the spirit of the age, he can ask questions, and judge from the tone of an answer whether the truth is told or not. He can go at least as far, by intuition and common sense, as the historian with all his sources; and he is just as likely to make an accurate judgment, apart from some matters of detail. Judging from the experience of the past—and that is what the historian is most entitled to judge from—the historian need have no compunction in presenting his 'interim report' about very recent events. And his experience of wading through the debris of dead quarrels and controversies may help him to wade through the flotsam and jetsam of contemporary affairs.

The claim that a long delay is essential before 'perspective' can be gained is unsound. A great deal of Mommsen's work on the Roman Republic is thoroughly tendentious. Views of the Reformation are, even to-day, very varied.

Anyone with experience of examining School Certificate papers will endorse the statement that answers to a question on the dissolution of the monasteries may be instantly divided into Roman Catholic schools and other schools. Mr. De Valera's interpretation of the age of Cromwell and the Battle of the Boyne differs very greatly from that of the late Lord Carson. Moreover, historians of the middle ages have sometimes involved themselves in controversies so bitter as to make it manifest that the passage of time does not necessarily provide 'perspective'. Before the present war German and French historians had succeeded in achieving a more or less agreed version of the causes of the outbreak of war in 1914. This agreed version is now, presumably, defunct; but it remains as a monument to the reasonableness with which historians may approach controversial (and very recent) topics.

Perhaps the greatest historian of all time was Thucydides. His work has sometimes been rivalled, but has never been surpassed. Yet his *History of the Peloponnesian War* was 'contemporary history' in the strictest sense. 'Thucydides, son of Olorus' appears as one of the *dramatis personæ* of the tragedy that he unfolds. His own career and his own happiness were ruined by the disastrous conflict. But there are few who challenge his impartiality, and few who accuse him of lack of 'perspective'. Xenophon's *Anabasis*, though not of the same calibre, has many of the virtues of Thucydides' work, and is also an example of 'contemporary history'. The Greeks, indeed, proved conclusively that 'contemporary history' could be as lively, as impartial, and as authoritative as any other type of history.

Certain gaps in our knowledge of contemporary events must of course be readily admitted. Yet we know a thousand times more about the collapse of France than we know about the collapse of Carthage. We know a thousand times more about the evacuation of Dunkirk than we know about the Battle of Hastings. We can meet and discuss matters, any day we like, with men who were at Dunkirk. Would not any

true medievalist give up his whole life's research for the sake of one interview with one Saxon who fought beside Harold at Hastings? Yet historians make their judgments on Carthage and on Hastings. They make their judgments on very defective evidence; but it is the only evidence they have, and no one denies their right to do so. Are historians to be denied the right to make their judgment now, upon Dunkirk and upon France—on a thousand times better evidence—simply because at some future date a little new material will come forward and a rather dubious 'perspective' will be achieved? It seems to occur to no one that 'perspective' may become worse rather than better, though this has happened more than once in the past.

It is not because there is insufficient evidence to draw a balanced conclusion on 'contemporary history' that the historian is customarily denied the right to make such judgments. He is denied the right because, if it were conceded to him, he would fulfil a function of immense importance, which our civilisation, in its present phase, will not grant to him. The statesman, the diplomat, the pontifical writer of leading articles, who appeal so frequently to 'the verdict of history', do so with confidence (though without carrying much conviction) in the happy assurance that this verdict will not be pronounced in their time. 'The verdict of history'—a judgment based on the study of the past and its accumulated wisdom and experience—might be highly inconvenient if announced authoritatively and speedily. To the cry, 'We appeal to the verdict of history', the answer should and could be, 'Here is the verdict of history'. It may be generations before this claim is conceded. But the claim will never be conceded if it is not made. And it will never be made until historians have greater confidence in their own knowledge and impartiality where contemporary events are concerned—until they emphasise the 90 per cent. that they already know, instead of lamenting over the 10 per cent. which may (or may not) be revealed later.

There is another aspect to this question. Unless his-

torians are thoroughly interested in 'contemporary history', they are unlikely to play their part in preserving the records of recent generations. Perfectly good historical evidence is perpetually disappearing under our very eyes, as men forget, as they die, as documents are destroyed or fall to pieces. The historian, experienced as he is in delving among the records of the past, knows precisely what the historian of the future is likely to want. He knows his duty to the past: he sometimes knows his duty in the present: he very seldom knows his duty to the future. The study of public opinion is elusive and difficult, and of first importance. But historians have had little influence on America's Gallup polls, or on such organisations as 'Mass Observation' on this side of the Atlantic. Future generations will eagerly consult the evidence provided by these investigations, and will find them in many ways unrepresentative and unsatisfactory. That will be, partly at least, the fault of the present generation of historians.

In the nineteenth century there were no Gallup polls or Mass Observations, and many historical generalisations are insecurely based as a result. One source exists that reveals the feelings and aspirations of a class to which the newspaper did not penetrate—a class that was seldom articulate. That source is the Victorian Broadsheet Ballad, collections of which are to be found in most of our large libraries—the Baring Gould collection in the British Museum being the most important. Two or three selections of these ballads have been published, and a few articles on the subject have also appeared. But there is no real compendium—no true book of reference. Nor, apparently, is there any demand for one. To my knowledge, half the publishers in the country felt themselves unable to undertake such a publication. They cannot be blamed: they have to make ends meet. The attitude of the University presses and of learned societies is not, however, so readily explicable. Presumably these ballads were not accepted for publication because they were not old enough. The idea appears to be that, when the vast mass of records has disappeared, those that chance to re-

main develop a scarcity value—and are cared for and printed. More modern documents or sources, often of much greater value, are simply allowed to rot. The fact remains that, in this age of incendiary bombs, an invaluable source for the study of nineteenth-century public opinion has been little worked on by historians and is in some danger of becoming a 'partial loss'.

A still more contemporary example may be given—the American 'pulp magazines'.¹ These are mines of information about the tastes, thoughts, and desires of a class that leaves few records. The paper and the printer's ink of these productions are deplorable: they will fall into dust before many generations are out. If this material is to be used for historical research, it must be used now—or there will be no opportunity of using it at all. The greater the interest of the historian in contemporary history, the more likely he is to work on ephemeral material of this kind and hand down his conclusions to his successors.

It is, no doubt, a natural modesty which has made historians bring their works, with a somewhat apologetic air, to 1914—and hasten to disclaim that any concluding remarks they may see fit to make on the period up to 1939 have any authoritative character. But surely the study of the past stultifies itself if it stops just when it is most needed—just when its judgments might be of real use to a distracted world? Are not historians selling their birthright—the birthright won for them by Thucydides—for a mess of pottage? For a quiet academic existence far from the madding crowd, for a reputation of amiability and absent-mindedness and general futility? Such characteristics may count for virtue in the individual historian: they can hardly count for virtue in the profession. Indeed, they give an impression of lack of courage rather than of modesty. The competent historian's opinion on the Munich Agreement is based on far greater

¹ See G. B. Henderson, 'Mars and The Monroe Doctrine' (in *Chambers' Journal*, May 1941, pp. 301-4). The article has not been reprinted in this collection of Dr. Henderson's essays.

and on far sounder evidence than (to take a random example) his opinion on the affair at Canossa, and is just as likely to be 'authoritative'.

There are, of course, historians who are profound students of 'contemporary history', and who have given the world the benefit of their considered judgments. But such historians are few. In general, judgments on contemporary events are given most freely by those who have not the experience of past generations to guide them; and those who have this experience, and are therefore most fitted to make such judgments, are too modest or too cautious to do so. Too long has the study of history condemned itself to sterility; and it is to be hoped that more and more historians will follow the example of their founder Thucydides, and labour in the difficult but fruitful field of contemporary history.

DISRAELI AND PALMERSTON IN 1857, OR,
THE DANGERS OF EXPLANATIONS IN
PARLIAMENT.¹

On 2 December 1854 a treaty was signed between Britain, France and Austria. By this treaty, Britain and France hoped to draw Austria into the Crimean War—Austria, on the contrary, hoped that Russia would be frightened into concessions, and that peace would thus be made without Austrian intervention in the war.² There was a powerful pro-Russian party at Vienna; the young Emperor Franz Josef was for a long time unable to make up his mind; and it was only after toilsome negotiations that the tripartite treaty was signed. A decisive factor in Franz Josef's ultimate decision was the Austrian fear of revolutionary intrigue in Italy, backed up by the French. Napoleon III had been the 'man of order' since the *coup d'état*; but this was only three years ago, and the Austrians feared that Napoleon might not have shed all his Carbonarist leanings. It might therefore be good policy for Austria to risk the growing antagonism of Russia, and enter into treaty engagements with France and Britain, if, in return, France would promise good behaviour in Italy.

On 30 November 1854, therefore, Hübner (Austrian minister in Paris) received instructions to negotiate 'une

¹ Reprinted from *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. vii, no. 2, 1942. The Editor of the *Journal* wrote: 'We are happy to have the opportunity of publishing the present article signed by the late Professor Temperley and Dr. Henderson, and containing in its closing pages some of the last historical writing from Professor Temperley's pen. Both writers contributed to the material and the form of the article; but Dr. Henderson provided the information from the Disraeli MSS., and so elucidated certain points that had originally attracted Professor Temperley's attention.'

² See above, pp. 182 ff.

convention tendant à maintenir durant la guerre, le *statu quo* territorial et l'ordre public en Italie. C'est un corollaire indispensable de la triple alliance....'¹ The French government admitted 'that Austria was fairly entitled to make the demand, as the Emperor had some months ago told M. Hübner that if Austria took part with Russia she must be prepared for the uncompromising hostility of France; but that if she joined with France against Russia, she might rely upon the active aid of France in any quarter where she might be attacked. . . .'² Hence, Hübner, returning home about midnight on 30 November, was able to telegraph to Vienna the French acceptance of the convention concerning Italy. The next day Drouyn de Lhuys (French Foreign Minister) showed a draft-treaty to Hübner, who found it perfectly satisfactory.³ The first article declared that 'Les Cours d'Autriche et de France s'obligent mutuellement à user de tous leurs moyens d'influence pour prévenir les tentatives qui, pendant qu'elles consacrent leurs efforts à résoudre, dans l'intérêt général de l'Europe, les complications qui ont surgi en Orient, pourraient être dirigées en Italie contre l'intégrité territoriale des états qui la composent'. The second article said that, whenever Austrian troops co-operated against Russia, in execution of the secret article of the tripartite treaty, France and Austria 'prennent aussi l'engagement éventuel de se concerter alors pour que leurs troupes respectives stationnées en Italie concourent d'un parfait accord au but indiqué ci-dessus'.⁴

On 2 December 1854, Walewski (French ambassador in London) communicated this draft treaty to Clarendon, the foreign secretary. He said that France was prepared to sign this treaty 'as soon as the opinion of Her Majesty's Govt. on

¹ Hübner, *Neufans*, (2 vols., (2nd edn.), 1905-8), i. 283.

² Walewski told this to Clarendon, 2 December 1854. Clarendon to Cowley, 5 December 1854, no. 1194: F.O. 27/1004 A.

³ Hübner, i. 283.

⁴ State Papers Domestic, France, F.O. 27/1040, contains two copies of this draft, headed: 'Project of Treaty between Austria and France: commd by Ct Walewski, Dec. 2: as to joint Military Action.'

the subject was ascertained'. Clarendon read the draft attentively, and expressed his regret that 'le gouv. de l'Empereur se soit trouvé dans la nécessité de souscrire avec l'Autriche un semblable traité, mais il comprend et admet très-bien qu'un refus eût été impossible'. Walewski said that France too regretted this necessity, 'mais, qu'après tout, nous ne nous engageons à faire que ce que nous aurions très certainement fait, même sans y être engagés.' Moreover, 'Drouyn de Lhuys thought he had best consulted the wishes of Her Majesty's Govt. by avoiding all references to England in his communications with M. Hübner on this subject, and by not inviting Her Majesty's Govt. to take part in the Convention.' Clarendon replied that he was glad he and his colleagues had not had 'imposed upon them the necessity of declining to become party to any such arrangement'. Walewski saw that the whole affair was distasteful to Clarendon, who hinted that some of his colleagues 'avaient pris plus d'ombrage que lui de notre Convention projetée avec l'Autriche'. But the British government could not resist the signature of the convention, in view of France's desire for an Austrian alliance, and the bad state of the Franco-British army in the Crimea. Clarendon finally gave a grudging benediction to the draft-treaty; 'the govt. of the Emperor having determined on grounds they thought sufficient to agree to it, they appeared, I said, to have given effect to their decision with caution'.¹

Clarendon's colleagues looked on the proposed Franco-Austrian convention without enthusiasm, and most of them expected small result from the tripartite treaty of 2 December. 'I am glad the Treaty with Austria is signed,' wrote Russell to Clarendon on 3 December: he was glad to have an unpleasant business concluded. But he added: 'I think we must steer clear of any approbation of the Austrian con-

¹ Clarendon's account of this interview is in his dispatch to Cowley, 5 December 1854, no. 1194: F. O. 27/1004 A. Walewski's account is in his dispatch to Drouyn de Lhuys, 2 December 1854: copy enclosed in a private letter from Cowley to Clarendon, 10 February 1857: MSS. *Clarendon Papers*.

vention with France. These Treaties are of an elastic nature, and if this new one were used for atrocious purposes, we ought to reserve our power of remonstrating, so the less we look into the terms the better.’¹ Russell’s policy was followed. Britain turned a blind eye to the further negotiations between France and Austria. It is difficult to see what else Britain could have done, though it was to have awkward consequences later. The cabinet was much more interested in the negotiations with Piedmont-Sardinia, which would bring reinforcements to the Crimea. But there was a well-founded feeling of uneasiness in the cabinet—a feeling that there was something hypocritical in accepting Piedmontese help, and encouraging Piedmontese aspirations, at the very moment that Britain’s ally, France, was guaranteeing the Italian *status quo*. Britain herself can hardly be accused of duplicity; but the Anglo-French alliance in which she was an equal partner, may be accused of duplicity. The left hand of the alliance carefully refrained from knowing what the right hand was doing. On 24 December 1854 Hübner was able to write: ‘Notre convention concernant la Péninsule, négociée ici, a été signée hier à Vienne. La France s’engage à défendre, pendant la guerre d’Orient, s’il le faut par les armes, le maintien du *statu quo* territorial en Italie. Le cabinet anglais a donné son assentiment, mais en faisant une grimace. Les John Russell et compagnie ne nous aiment pas.’²

The Franco-Austrian convention on Italy was to come into force only if Austria participated in the Crimean War. Austria never so participated: but this does not mean that the treaty was altogether without significance. It was never published; but it is clear that Austria used it to reassure the Italian princes, who lived in fear of French, Mazzinist, or Muratist intrigue. It was not a coincidence that the British minister in Tuscany wrote in his first dispatch of 1855 ‘that the Austrian garrison of Leghorn consisting of near two

¹ Russell to Clarendon, 3 December 1854: *ibid.*

² Hübner, i. 290.

thousand men left that city yesterday morning'.¹ Moreover Buol was now in a strong position with regard to Piedmontese aspirations, and when he heard of the approaching participation of Piedmont in the war he wrote: 'Les rêves ambitieux que le Piedmont n'a cessé de caresser nous feraient attacher un prix particulier à ce qu'il ne lui fût laissé aucun doute que sa participation à la guerre ne pourrait en aucun cas servir de point de départ à des vues d'agrandissement territorial.'²

Two months after the Franco-Austrian treaty on Italy was signed, Palmerston (who had been Home Secretary in Aberdeen's cabinet) became Prime Minister. The Crimean War was brought to an end by the treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856. The peace was unpopular in Britain, where another campaign would have been appreciated; but Palmerston was not blamed for it, and his political prestige stood much higher as a result of the Crimean adventure. The apparent stability of Palmerston's government was galling to Disraeli, leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Disraeli understood that Palmerston's popularity in the country was based on his handling of foreign affairs. If Palmerston were to be overthrown, therefore, it was his foreign policy that had to be discredited. In December, Disraeli visited Paris. His object, apparently, was to undermine Napoleon III's confidence in Palmerston; and in this he failed. He found Napoleon 'entirely with Palmerston. His Majesty said to me: "Lord Derby has no men."'³ Napoleon asserted 'that we Tories were his hereditary enemies, and that he had, therefore, no choice in the matter'.⁴

Though Napoleon's confidence in Palmerston was strong

¹ Sir H. L. Bulwer to Clarendon, 3 January 1855, no. 1, Florence: F.O. 170/69.

² Buol to Hübner, 4 January 1855, no. 6: Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Frankreich, ix. Fasc. 50. A similar dispatch went to Collaredo, Austrian minister in London.

³ Monypenny and Buckle, *Disraeli* (2nd. edn.), i. 1457.

⁴ Vitzthum von Eckstaedt, *St Petersburg and London* (2 vols., 1887), ii. 39.

enough to resist Disraeli's assaults, the visit to Paris was not altogether in vain. Disraeli met a young unpaid attaché of the Paris Embassy, Ralph Anstruther Earle¹—a man of considerable ambition and no scruples. Earle willingly supplied Disraeli with information from the Embassy archives, and was in fact doing so before Disraeli left Paris. For example, on 15 December 1856, he wrote: 'The other day I told you, on the authority of our dispatches from Bern, that the Neufchatel question would probably be settled by diplomacy. Since I left you, this morning, I have learnt that the aspect of affairs is altered, and that both Russia and Switzerland are preparing for war.'² Earle was prolific both of information and of advice as to how Palmerston might be annoyed and the Conservative case furthered. His object was to get into Parliament, and ultimately to secure some remunerative office.

Earle knew of the Franco-Austrian treaty of December 1854, and was able to refresh his memory by reference to the Embassy archives. He passed this information on to Disraeli during the Paris visit, and shortly afterwards wrote a letter on the subject:³

'I would suggest that something should be said about the perfidy⁴ of Ld. P., who, having encouraged the Italians to cherish schemes of national independence, never attempted to obtain the publication of the secret treaty, tho' he allowed

¹ Earle's appointment at Paris dated from 6 October 1854 (Foreign Office List).

² Earle to Disraeli: envelope addressed to Mrs. Disraeli. MSS. Disraeli Papers, Box xiii. Dr. G. B. Henderson is indebted to Mr. Langley Taylor of Beaconsfield for access to these private papers, and to Mrs. Henderson for assistance in locating two bundles of Earle's correspondence.

³ MSS. Disraeli Papers, Box ii. The letter is undated, but evidently lies between 23 January and 5 February 1857—the dates of the preceding and succeeding letters. On the envelope is written: 'No. 1: Immediate: The R. Honble. B. Disraeli, M.P.' The letter is signed 'X' and purports to be a copy made by Earle of a communication from an anonymous person. But evidently X = Earle. Most of the Earle correspondence has no proper address or signature.

⁴ 'Heartlessness' is crossed out, and 'perfidy' inserted.

it to be communicated to the Italian Govts. There was consolation for the Princes but no warning to the people. The patriots went on hoping and plotting, stimulated by the circumstances of the war, quite ignorant that since that war began their chances had become infinitely less. Lord Palmerston allowed the Italian liberals to fight on, under the masked battery of France. How many plots, how many assassinations etc. etc. wd the publication of that treaty have spared!

‘It is necessary to be careful, in speaking on this subject, not to wound the French govt. Ld. P. must be made to stand alone in his villainy.’

Earle here paints matters in their darkest possible colours; but the French and British governments could not support both Austrian and Piedmontese policy in Italy at the same time, and Disraeli was shrewd enough to see that the Austro-French treaty was a subject on which the British government was likely to be uneasy.

On 3 February 1857 therefore (in the debate on the address in answer to the speech of the Lords Commissioners) Disraeli declared that, after the Crimean War was over, Palmerston’s government diverted the public attention from home affairs by concentrating on the Italian question: ‘But will it be believed that all this time, while Lord Clarendon was listening to the passionate representations of Count Cavour, in which he impeached the very existence of Austrian rule in Italy—at the time when the noble lord, unable to extricate himself from some fatal engagement into which he had entered with Sardinia, found it necessary to commence those protocols which have led to so much excitement, from which so much was expected, and on which were wasted, I may say, six months of the attention of the people of this country—will it be believed that at this very time a secret treaty was in existence guaranteeing to Austria the whole of her Italian dominions?’ Soon after this Palmerston interjected: ‘What Power gave that guarantee?’ and Disraeli continued: ‘What Power, says the noble Lord, gave that

guarantee? It was given by the only Power that Austria fears in such a matter; it was given by France, and given not merely with the sanction, not merely with the approval of the noble Lord and his government, but by their advice and at their special instance. The existence of a secret treaty cannot now be denied, although it is mentioned now for the first time.’¹

Disraeli was correct in saying that there had been a secret treaty: but he was wrong in his implications. ‘The noble Lord and his government’ did not come into office until two months after the signature of the treaty, though most of its members had been in the Aberdeen cabinet. And, though a reluctant approval had been given by Britain, the treaty was certainly not signed ‘by their advice and at their special instance’.

Later in the debate, Palmerston rose and dealt with Disraeli’s charges: ‘I must say that the greater part of the speech we have just heard from him with reference to our foreign policy was a pure and entire romance. The right hon. Gentleman has been spending part of the vacation in Paris. We know that in that gay capital are many men who amuse themselves by practising upon the credulity of persons whom they call *gobemouches* or flycatchers. . . . Upon the affairs of Italy the right hon. Gentleman had access, I suppose, to the archives which we know nothing about.’² He has found out a treaty of which we have never heard. . . . The right hon. Gentleman may have seen such a treaty; if he says he has I certainly shall not contradict him; but I must say that we are totally ignorant of its existence; and, so far are we from having advised the adoption of such a treaty, that if we had been consulted with respect to its conclusion we should certainly have given advice in a precisely opposite direction. That

¹ Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv. 110.

² A true word spoken in jest. ‘My information was derived from the only official documents, relating to the transaction, in all of which (they consist of despatches, which passed between Lord Cowley and Lord Clarendon) a *treaty* is spoken of.’ Earle to Disraeli, 28 February 1857: MSS. Disraeli Papers, Box ii.

treaty is entirely a romance—totally without the slightest foundation’—except that, Palmerston believed, France had assured Austria that she would take no part in any insurrection in Italy if such were to occur as a result of Austria joining in the Crimean War.¹

Palmerston’s speech shows that he had forgotten entirely about the Franco-Austrian treaty. He would not have denied the existence of the treaty in such categorical terms if he had had any doubts; and this reveals an astonishing degree of forgetfulness on Palmerston’s part. He remembered nothing except that there had been some conversations between France and Austria on Italian affairs, and that France had declared her intention of supporting Austria in Italy, if Austria would support France in the Orient. Palmerston’s forgetfulness was shared by Gladstone,² who had also been a member of Aberdeen’s cabinet, and who had shown great interest in Italian affairs. There was evidently no duplicity in this, but honest absent-mindedness; and it is a reminder that statesmen are perhaps more fallible, and less unscrupulous, than is commonly believed.

Palmerston and his government seem to have thought that this parliamentary skirmish was the end of the matter; but Disraeli had no intention of being called a *gobemouches*, and having his speech labelled a romance, with impunity. Ralph Earle sent him detailed information about the secret treaty, and his facts were correct. On 5 February he wrote: ‘The English Govt. can hardly be said to have suggested that her Italian possessions should be guaranteed to Austria by France, but Lord Clarendon was officially informed of what was passing, by the French ambassador in London, at least a fortnight before the treaty was signed. He certainly said nothing, in the course of his communications with the French govt. upon this subject, to indicate that England would have given a similar guarantee; but he did not, on the other hand, attempt to dissuade the Emperor from complying with the wishes of Austria. . . . The signature of this

¹ Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv. 138.

² *Ibid.*, 158-64.

secret treaty enabled Austria to withdraw a portion of her troops from Italy and by the permission of France, she was allowed 'to tranquillize' the Italian govts. by telling them of the French guarantee. Before the treaty was signed, the English govt. *knew* that Austria would, in this way, turn the treaty to account. . . . It must not be forgotten that Mr. Gladstone was himself a member of the govt. at the time at which this treaty was negotiated; but his concurrence in the course pursued by Ld. Clarendon—if the question was ever mentioned at a cabinet council—would not expose him to the charge of inconsistency. This cannot be said for Ld. P.¹ It is not easy to see rational grounds for distinguishing between Palmerston and Gladstone in this way; both had been members of the Aberdeen cabinet, and their views on Italy were not dissimilar. But the Tory opposition wished to discredit Palmerston without annoying Gladstone, who had not yet cast his lot with the Whig-Liberal party, and who might still be lured back to the Tory camp.

On 8 February Earle wrote again, with more details of the secret treaty, and advice as to how this knowledge might best be used. 'Even supposing that the secret treaty expired at the conclusion of peace and is therefore no longer a matter of any moment, still Ld. P. must have known of its existence, for not only was he in the cabinet at the time the treaty was made, but for more than two years of his Premiership it must have constituted an important element in all his calculations of European policy. I hope you observed how positive was his denial. Perhaps it would be better not to hint at the possibility of the treaty having been only temporary. It would be so humiliating for him to have to plead that quibble in defence of his contradiction of your statement.'² Fortified by assurances that his information was correct, and irritated by Palmerston's denials and personalities, Disraeli determined to return to the charge. He gave notice that he would raise the question of the secret treaty in the House of Commons on 10 February.

¹ MSS Disraeli Papers, Box. ii.

² *Ibid.*

When Palmerston heard that the question was to be raised again, he became somewhat uneasy, and wrote to Clarendon: 'I hear that Disraeli is to ask me a Question Tomorrow about his Secret Treaty. Would it not be well to desire Cowley by Telegraph to inquire and let us know whether there is any foundation for Dizzy's story about this Guarantee Treaty?'¹ Clarendon thereupon telegraphed to Cowley and also wrote him a private letter: 'Dizzy has given notice of a *most important* motion tomorrow when he hopes Palmn. (who has the gout) will not be present,—it is about his mare's nest of the Treaty by wch at our instigation France guarantees to Austria her Italian possessions. I conclude he can mean nothing but that Convention 3 years ago by wch France, in the event of Austria being actively engaged in war with Russia, undertook *with the troops wch she had in Italy*, to assist in maintaining order in the Italian possessions of Austria if tranquillity was disturbed there. With this we declined having anything to do, and I am not sure that we ever had official knowledge of the Convention being concluded.'² This letter shows that Clarendon's memory was far better than Palmerston's, on the events of December 1854. If he, and not Palmerston, had answered Disraeli's accusations of 3 February, it is clear that the existence of the treaty would not have been denied, but only its significance. It was Palmerston's blank denial that was now making things so awkward for the government. Parliament was asking the simple question: 'Was there a treaty or was there no treaty?' If the mere existence of a treaty were now admitted, Disraeli would be considered to have scored a point—even if all his deductions and implications were incorrect.

On 9 February, the day that Clarendon was telegraphing enquiries to Cowley, Cowley was writing a private letter to Clarendon. Cowley had had a conversation with Walewski, who spontaneously brought up the subject of Disraeli's

¹ Palmerston to Clarendon, 9 February 1857: MSS. Clarendon Papers.

² Clarendon to Cowley, 9 February 1857: MSS. Wellesley Papers.

insinuations.¹ 'By the way,' wrote Cowley, 'I may as well mention that Walewski expressed great astonishment at Dizzy's assertion about the French treaty with Austria. Not only did no such treaty exist, but the one which had been on the tapis, when there was a chance of Austria taking part in the late war, and by which France was to bind herself to prevent Austria being molested in Italy, was never signed. . . .'² This letter was the result of a misunderstanding. Cowley later wrote: 'I must have misunderstood Walewski, or when he told me the treaty had never been signed, he must have meant that it never came into force, for its application depended on Austria's declaring war with Russia.'³ Walewski 'talked of it as having "tombé dans l'eau n'ayant pas eu de suite &c"', and 'although I had always thought myself that it had been signed, I quite understood him to assert the contrary'.⁴ Cowley telegraphed on 10 February that the treaty had been signed; but the news did not come through in time, and Palmerston dealt with Disraeli's question, basing his answer on Cowley's letter of the 9th which stated that the treaty had never been signed. Meanwhile, Disraeli's secret service had been working efficiently. Ralph Earle telegraphed twice on the 9th, and informed Disraeli that enquiries were being made in Paris.⁵

On 10 February Disraeli raised the matter in the House of Commons. He read out Palmerston's denial of 3 February, and again asserted that, in spite of the Premier's statement, there had been a Franco-Austrian treaty. Moreover, 'throughout the whole of the negotiations for this treaty, Her Majesty's government were privy to them from the first; that they counselled them; that the suggestions received their approbation, their concurrence, I will even say their cordial concurrence; and that they were formally

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, 12 February 1857: MSS. Clarendon Papers. And telegraphic dispatch, 12 February 1857: F.O. 27/1190.

² Cowley to Clarendon, 9 February 1857: MSS. Clarendon Papers.

³ Cowley to Clarendon, 10 February 1857: *ibid.*

⁴ Cowley to Clarendon, 12 February 1857: *ibid.*

⁵ Earle to Disraeli, 10 February 1857: MSS. Disraeli Papers, Box ii.

advised upon the subject before the execution of that treaty took place.'¹ Palmerston was not so self-assured in his reply as he had been on 3 February. He said that there had been Franco-Austrian conversations, of which Britain had been aware. 'The arrangement was embodied in the shape of a convention; the right hon. Gentleman says that Convention was signed on a certain day in December. I can only say that from information received as late as yesterday from a quarter likely to be correct,² there is great reason to doubt that that Convention was ever signed at all.' Such a convention, even if signed, would not have been a guarantee and would have been purely temporary. 'It is a total perversion of things to represent such an arrangement as a guarantee given by France for the integrity of the Austrian possessions in Italy.'³ Disraeli had therefore made some progress. On the 3rd Palmerston had said that the treaty was a 'romance'. Now he admitted that there had been a treaty, but asserted that it had never been signed.

On the following day, 11 February, Cowley's letter of the 10th arrived with its enclosure—Walewski's despatch of 2 December 1854 describing the interview in which Clarendon had given his reluctant consent to the proposed secret treaty. Palmerston was evidently better pleased by the reluctance than by the consent, and he wrote: 'This Dispatch of Walewskys is very satisfactory and confirms all we have said.' He pointed out that the dispatch did not prove that the treaty was ever signed; and, hoping against hope, suggested that Cowley should again be asked whether the treaty had been signed or not.⁴ Clarendon accordingly telegraphed to Cowley: 'Ask Walewski whether His Excellency was correct in his former statement that the Treaty never was actually signed, or whether the Treaty was in point of

¹ Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv, 465-6. Disraeli knew, from Earle's letters, that 'cordial concurrence' was an exaggeration.

² Cowley's letter of the 9th, based on the misunderstanding with Walewski.

³ Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv, 470-2.

⁴ Palmerston to Clarendon, 11 February 1857: MSS. Clarendon Papers.

fact signed . . . but was looked upon as a dead letter, Austria not having declared war against Russia. . . .'¹ Cowley's telegraphic reply (dispatched at 1 a.m. on 12 February) left no possibility of doubt. He declared: 'The Treaty was signed. It was my mistake, and pray show me up for saying that it was not signed. . . .'²

It was never Palmerston's habit to shelter behind his subordinates; and when, on 12 February, he performed in the House the unpleasant task of stating that the treaty had been signed, he did not use this method of attempting to escape responsibility. He said that he had believed the treaty to have remained unsigned (he used the word 'convention', but it was a meaningless distinction) and that he had since ascertained that signature had taken place. 'But Austria never having, in point of fact, declared war, the convention, although signed, has been a dead letter and has had no application or effect whatsoever.'³ Disraeli then rose, and was able to point out that on 3 February there was no treaty; on 10 February there was a treaty, but it had not been signed; and on 12 February the treaty had been signed but had never been applied. His original statement was, he claimed, correct in every detail; and the treaty had not only been signed but had been extensively acted upon. Palmerston's retort showed that he had lost his temper—a very rare thing with him. He engaged in an unseemly wrangle with Disraeli, in which he was in the wrong, as to whether his opponent had stated that the treaty had been signed at the 'instigation' or at the 'instance' of the British government. In spite of Disraeli's 'vapouring manner', he had been 'grossly and entirely misinformed as to the facts of the case'.⁴ The comment of Disraeli's journal, *The Press*, is probably the best: 'Subsequently

¹ Cipher telegraphic dispatch, Clarendon to Cowley, 11 February 1857: F.O. 27/1173.

² F.O. 27/1190. See also Cowley's private letter to Clarendon, 12 February 1857: MSS. Clarendon Papers. 'I hope that Lord P. explained that the mistake was mine.'

³ Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv. 535.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 536-9.

Lord Palmerston lost his temper, and we have no wish to dwell on the melancholy scene that closed the discussion.’¹

It is clear that the *dénouement* of the affair told against Palmerston in the House. Greville’s account (14 February) is as follows: ‘The defeat which Disraeli sustained the other night was turned the night before last into something like a triumph, and Palmerston found himself in a disagreeable position. Disraeli had asserted that a treaty had been concluded between France and Austria for certain ends and at a certain time. Palmerston flatly contradicted him, and with great insolence of manner, especially insisting that it was nothing but a Convention, and that conditional, which *never had been signed*. Two nights after Palmerston came down to the House, and in a very jaunty way said he must correct his former statement, and inform the House he had just discovered that the Convention *had been signed*. Great triumph naturally on the part of Disraeli, who poured forth a rather violent invective. Then Palmerston lost his temper and retorted that Disraeli was trying to cover an ignominious retreat by vapouring. This language, under the circumstances of the case, was very imprudent and very improper, and (unlike what he had ever experienced before) he sat down without a single cheer, his own people even not venturing to challenge the approbation of the House in a matter in which, though Disraeli was not right, Palmerston was so clearly wrong. What business had he to make such a mistake? for he ought to have been perfectly and accurately informed of every detail connected with foreign affairs.’

Greville was no admirer of Palmerston; but he admired Disraeli even less, and his account of the impression in political circles is probably accurate.² Even Clarendon had some criticism to make, and wrote to Cowley that Palmerston had ‘said a little too much’ on the 10th ‘about the treaty not having been signed, though I warned him not to do so’. He believed, however, that Palmerston had given Disraeli

¹ *The Press*, vol. v, no. 198, 14 February 1857.

² *The Greville Memoirs* (8 vols., 1896), viii. 86-7.

'a regular dressing' on the 12th.¹ This interpretation of that 'melancholy scene' is evidence of Clarendon's capacity for regarding Palmerston's acts through rose-tinted spectacles, but it is not evidence of the feeling of the House on that occasion.

Several conclusions are to be drawn from this intrinsically trivial incident. First, it reveals an extraordinary degree of forgetfulness on the part of Palmerston, and much maladroitness in displaying it before the House. His original error was in his complete denial of 3 February, and his efforts to extricate himself made matters worse. Mr. Buckle speculated whether 'Palmerston was boldly bluffing, or whether his memory had failed him'.² It is clear that the second hypothesis is correct. Second, the behaviour of Ralph Earle was treacherous and cannot be defended. Mr. Buckle frankly admitted that 'Disraeli showed some lack of scruple and of delicacy in availing himself of such help';³ but it was not unnatural, in a biographer, to refrain from dwelling on this aspect of the matter. The relations of Earle and Disraeli were naturally concealed as much as possible and evidence on this topic will always be defective. But enough material has survived to throw a strange light on the methods used by the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Third, it was less than a month after Palmerston's loss of temper on 12 February that his government fell, on another question—Sir John Bowring's misbehaviour in China, and the bombardment of Canton.⁴ It is clear that Palmerston's demonstration of ignorance on the Franco-Austrian affair had told against him in the House of Commons, and this may have influenced a few of the wavering votes that made up the majority of sixteen against the government. It was not a

¹ Clarendon to Cowley, 12 February 1857: MSS. Wellesley Papers.

² Monypenny and Buckle, i. 1466.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 1468.

⁴ House of Lords, 26 February 1857: Ayes 146, Noes 110. Government victory (Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv, 1385). House of Commons, 3 March 1857: Ayes 263, Noes 247. Government defeat (Hansard, 3rd Series, cxliv, 1846).

Disraelian intrigue that brought Palmerston down; but it probably contributed something to this result.

This incident is probably less important for its particular though interesting, application, than for its general bearing upon the authenticity of parliamentary utterances. In parliament, men are apt to become excited, or to be taken off their guard. Under the electric influence of the parliamentary atmosphere, ministers are led into statements that they would otherwise avoid. To give another example from Palmerston himself: He accepted Seymour's conversations with Nicholas, reported in 1853, as evidence of the Czar's disinterestedness, and in a letter pronounced him to be 'a gentleman'. But when, in the heat of war, a year later, the papers were made public (17 March 1854), he referred to them in the Commons as making it 'clear as the sun at noon-day' that the Czar had intended to hasten the dissolution of Turkey.¹ In this case he flatly contradicted his own previous written pronouncement. The Commons, like Palmerston, were under the influence of war psychology; and no one rose with secret information—like Disraeli three years later—to question the authenticity of his statement.

It is easy to cite other examples of mis-statements in parliament. Thus Gladstone declared, in 1871, that the Black Sea clauses were not 'paramount and central' in the treaty of 1856. This was certainly incorrect, as Palmerston's contemporary evidence shows. The explanation is that Gladstone in 1856 had strongly objected to the Black Sea clauses, and was therefore inclined to regard their disappearance as a benefit. As in the previous instance, the error was due to the speaker viewing past events in the light of present prejudices.

A different kind of error was hinted at by Lord Stanley, as Foreign Secretary, in 1867, with reference to a speech of his father, the 14th Earl of Derby. He told the Prussian ambassador, Count Bernstorff, that 'discussions in the House of Lords were, from the difficulty of hearing, often

¹ Harold Temperley, *England and the Near East: the Crimea* (1936), 270, 278.

imperfectly reported; and that I could not undertake to defend words attributed to Lord Derby, without knowing whether they really had been used or not: but that I would explain to him my idea of the obligations involved in a collective guarantee'.¹ Here Stanley lays stress on imperfect reporting, which is certainly one way in which the public is misled. It is even more important, however, to stress the circumstances of excitement, of lack of preparation, or of sudden interrogation, which render an utterance in parliament liable to error or to exaggeration. The fumbings and inaccuracies of Palmerston in 1857, in front of Disraeli, prove beyond doubt the danger of historians citing oral statements in parliament as evidence as to a fact. Almost any form of written statement, whether private or public, is a much more certain demonstration of fact than any 'winged words' spoken in debate. Modern historical criticism is not always subjective: it tends to be mechanical and external, and to accept various types of statement at their face value. The examples cited here help to show that a Minister is much more liable to error when explaining or defending himself in debate than when in conference with a diplomat in private. He is still more likely to be exact when writing a minute, drafting a dispatch, or explaining his policy in a private letter to a friend.

¹ Stanley to Loftus, 25 June 1867, no. 200: F.O. 64/615. Endorsed as 'seen by Lord Derby and the Queen'.

RALPH ANSTRUTHER EARLE¹

The name of Ralph Anstruther Earle is to-day unknown to history. He was not a prominent figure among his contemporaries, between sixty and eighty years ago, and now he has passed into oblivion—along with thousands of others, diplomats and civil servants, clerks and secretaries, lawyers and parliamentarians, who in their day were not without importance and influence. A resuscitation is seldom possible: perhaps it is seldom desirable. But the case of Ralph Earle is exceptional: his activities both in the diplomatic and political world were distinctly out of the ordinary; and the surviving records furnish enough material for a brief sketch—though not a detailed account—of a career that even to-day seems not unworthy of study.

Ralph Anstruther Earle was born in 1835, and was a member of the famous Liverpool family of Earle. His grandfather, William, was a Whig, a magistrate, and colonel of the Liverpool Fusiliers, a volunteer force raised in 1803. His father, Charles, was educated at Eton. He had no trade or profession, and his main interest in life seems to have been cricket.² Ralph Earle himself was sent to Harrow school which, under the able direction of Dr. Vaughan, was passing through one of its best periods. He distinguished himself there, particularly in English composition,³ and came under the notice of Lord Clarendon, the foreign secretary, in 1854.⁴ Ralph was an excellent linguist, speaking French and

¹ Reprinted from *The English Historical Review*, April 1943.

² T. Algernon Earle, 'Earle of Allerton Tower,' *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society*, vol. xlii; new series, vol. vi (1890). I am indebted to Mrs. Edna Rideout for local information about the Earle family.

³ Henry Drummond Wolff, *Rambling Recollections* (2 vols., 1908), i. 63.

⁴ Lord Clarendon sent his sons to Harrow. Ralph's elder brother, Charles, married a niece of Lord Clarendon later: but there seems to have been no connexion between this and Ralph's appointment.

German fluently,¹ and his connexions were sufficiently whiggish to recommend him to Lord Clarendon. He was consequently offered an appointment in the diplomatic service, and on 6 October 1854 he became an unpaid attaché at the British Embassy in Paris. Britain and France were at this time in close alliance, waging the Crimean War; and the Paris embassy was undoubtedly the most important of all. So this promising youth of nineteen had certainly been given a fair start on what might have been a distinguished diplomatic career.

Ralph was reserved in manner, and was not generally popular. There is some evidence that his chief, Lord Cowley, did not like him; and Ralph certainly did not like Cowley. He found life 'somewhat wearisome',² and was perhaps temperamentally unsuited to the copying and précis-writing, ciphering, and deciphering, that were the chief occupation of young attachés at busy embassies. In the winter of 1856, Disraeli and his wife visited Paris. The statesman of nearly fifty-two and the attaché of twenty-one seem to have been instantly attracted to each other. Sir John Pakington later said that Ralph Earle 'though of a Whig family, has always been conservative in feeling and inclination'.³ Ralph seems to have had a sort of romantic attachment for Disraeli. A friend said that he admired him enthusiastically.⁴ Ralph's dislike for Cowley, who was closely connected with the Whigs, may have tempted him to throw in his lot with the

¹ Information from Ralph Earle's nephew, Sir Lionel Earle, who has been kind enough to put his recollections at my disposal.

² Ralph A. Earle to Disraeli, 23 January 1857. This letter, like many of Ralph's to Disraeli, is neither addressed nor signed. There are two bundles of letters, in Box xiii and Box ii respectively, in the MSS. Disraeli Papers at Hughenden Manor. These letters, which I read by kind permission of Mr. Langley-Taylor of Beaconsfield, were used by Messrs. Monypenny and Buckle for their *Life of Disraeli*, but have not otherwise been utilised. They provide the principal evidence for Ralph Earle's activities, since Ralph's own papers seem to have been destroyed by his brother Charles after Ralph's death.

³ Note by Pakington, appended to letter of Ralph A. Earle to Pakington, 23 February 1858, and forwarded by him to Disraeli.

⁴ Sir William Fraser, *Disraeli and his Day* (2nd ed., 1891), p. 364

opposition. Above all, Ralph was flattered by Disraeli's condescension towards one so young. Be that as it may, the inference is clear: Ralph and Disraeli—whether in so many words or not—struck a bargain. Ralph was to keep Disraeli in touch with everything that went on at the embassy, however confidential, and pick up stray pieces of information from diplomatic circles. He was, in fact, to be a sort of secret service agent, providing the opposition with facts and arguments which might prove useful in harassing Palmerston and his colleagues. In return, Disraeli, when opportunity offered, would advance Ralph in the diplomatic or political world. Family tradition—which is valuable where other information is scanty—confirms the view that 'they were both schemers of the first water'.¹

Disraeli left Paris in January 1857, and Ralph Earle remained as attaché in the embassy—ostensibly a public servant, actually Disraeli's private agent. Their channels of communication are somewhat obscure. Earle's letters to Disraeli were generally unsigned, or signed mysteriously 'X', and addressed to Mrs. Disraeli, or to Disraeli himself at the House of Commons. Disraeli's letters to Earle do not survive, but there is evidence that he communicated with Earle through a confederate in the Foreign Office. John Bidwell, a clerk of conservative sympathies in that office, had been promoted on 14 December 1852 to a second-class clerkship and on 15 December to the post of précis-writer to the secretary of state for foreign affairs. He was in the office dealing with 'France, Switzerland, Greece, and Miscellaneous'.² Derby's ministry was at that time tottering to its fall: it resigned on 17 December. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the conservatives chose this moment to place, in a key position on the staff of the Foreign Office, a man of their political complexion who might be of use to them thereafter. Precisely what part John Bidwell played is not yet known; but it seems a likely conjecture that Disraeli had

¹ Sir Lionel Earle's phrase, July 1938.

² Foreign Office List for 1856.

his secret service in the Foreign Office as well as in the Paris embassy. On 28 February 1857 Ralph wrote to Disraeli that there was no mention of a treaty after a certain date 'in our archives nor in those of the Foreign Office'. Ralph had searched the embassy archives himself: but who had searched the archives of the Foreign Office? It is clear that Bidwell and Earle were on terms of personal friendship.¹ On 28 February 1857 Ralph wrote to Disraeli: 'If you have anything to write to me, perhaps you would send the letter, *without any outward or visible sign*, to the Foreign Office. They will forward it, especially if it looks like a bill.' On 21 February 1858 (when Palmerston had resigned, and the conservatives were on the point of forming a government) Ralph came rather more into the open, and wrote to Disraeli, suggesting that a letter might be sent indirectly to Napoleon III.

The letter might be sent to the Foreign Office, under cover to me, thus addressed:

Ralph Earle, Esqre,
British Embassy,
Paris.

Care of J. Bidwell, Esqre, F.O. . . .

In writing to me avoid, I pray you, the well-known seal.

This proves Bidwell to have privy to the Disraeli-Earle correspondence, and the evidence, though scanty, is sufficient to implicate Bidwell to some extent in the affair.

While Disraeli had still been in Paris, Ralph Earle had already entered into correspondence with him. After his departure, the letters became very numerous. Ralph Earle already considered himself fully in the conservative camp, and on 23 January 1857 wrote to Disraeli: 'I am sorry that the enemy should know of your relations with the Emperor'

¹ Ralph Earle wrote to Disraeli (probably December 1858) that 'Bidwell tells me that it wd. be very desirable, in my interest, that you shd. again say something to Ld. Malmesbury to remind him that you wish me to be considered'.

(with whom Disraeli had had a rather unsuccessful interview), and: 'I was delighted to see the Peelite organ attacking Ld. Palmerston'. His letters contained a good deal of miscellaneous information on Swiss and Rumanian affairs, which Earle thought might be used to inconvenience the government. He then produced evidence of a secret treaty between France and Austria, signed in December 1854, on the subject of Italy. Disraeli made use of this information, in an attempt to prove that Palmerston was pursuing a policy of duplicity; and through Palmerston's mishandling of the matter, made him appear in a very bad light before the House of Commons.¹ On 3 March 1857 Palmerston was defeated on another question in the Commons, and Earle thought that his opportunity had come. On 4 March he wrote to Disraeli as follows:

Pray accept my warmest congratulations on your triumph.

I am, of course, dying for further news.

You know how little bureaucratic distinctions excite my ambition. Thus I would preface the offer, which I am about to make, to serve as your private secretary, in the event of your becoming Foreign Secretary. You would find me zealous and devoted & as I have not been unobservant since I first entered diplomacy, you might perhaps find me useful.

Now forget that I have spoken of myself and listen, for a moment, to what I am going to say.

It is difficult for any Minister to conduct the foreign affairs of the country, without being engaged in transactions which require—in his own interest, I mean—to be kept safely secret. If this is true generally, it wd. be so especially at the present moment, if the Emperor, with his ambitious tendencies, found that he had to deal with an English Minister of comprehensive and constructive mind. Now it is difficult to believe that the present occupants of office—to whom almost all the bureaucracy owe their appointments—should retire from power, without having established some relations with the permanent agents

¹ This matter has been dealt with in detail by Harold Temperley and Gavin B. Henderson, 'Disraeli and Palmerston in 1857, or the dangers of explanations in Parliament' (*Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. vii, no. 2, 1942). See above, pp. 249-266.

of the Govt.¹ This seems to me to be another reason for giving the great Embassies to partisans of your administration, but the reason I have alluded to this subject was upon a matter of detail. I wd. have you establish a sort of '*cabinet du ministre*' as the confidential staff of a French minister is called. The materials out of which you could form such a body wd. be the parliamentary Under-Secretary and the two private secretaries. Now if the Embassies at Paris, Vienna, & St. Petersburg were filled by partisans, & if you substituted for their chanceries (of course not formally) confidential private secretaries—also chosen from among your partisans—you wd. be able to carry on any correspondence with foreign courts without any fear of its falling into improper hands. The archives of this correspondence you wd. carry away with you, on leaving office, and no trace of it wd. remain at the Foreign Office or at our Missions abroad. . . .

Perhaps it will be easier to change their Excellencies now than it was when you last came into office, as Ld. Wodehouse will, of course, resign, & perhaps Ld. Cowley will also. He is, however, a favourite at Court & I should be glad if Prince A(lbert) could be led to look upon him as a bulldog of Lord Palmerston's & as devoted to his policy.

I hope you will not forget me if there is a dissolution.

This letter gives much insight into Ralph Earle's cast of mind. His deception of Cowley, and his mysterious correspondence with Disraeli, had given him a taste for intrigue that was to dominate his political life. He imagined this type of intrigue to be a method of conducting foreign affairs that should be widely extended—ultimately, apparently, rendering dispatches and ambassadors almost superfluous.

Earle's dislike for Cowley shown in this letter, is displayed more vividly in another letter of the same period.² 'I must say again what I have said before', wrote Earle to Disraeli,

that Ld. Cowley is Ld. P(almerston)'s most useful subordinate. By character and temperament he is well qualified for carrying out the Palmerstonian policy, and circumstances have given him great advan-

¹ If the Bidwell hypothesis is correct, it would provide a reason for the occurrence of this idea to Earle's mind.

² The letter is dated 1 June 1857, but this does not seem to be accurate, since there was then no hope of the conservatives getting into office, Palmerston having won a general election. The letter was perhaps written a couple of months earlier.

tages in his dealings with the Emperor. He is not, perhaps, an able man, but the ministers whom he has to encounter are not men of talent, and, wanting integrity and firmness, they are always found to yield to one who is, at least, honest and resolute.

Again, that Ld. Cowley should have supported Ld. P. on a recent occasion (Secret Treaty) was only natural and just, but it was quite unnecessary for him (in his zeal for his chief) to try to bring you into contempt and, considering that he had served under your Govt., his conduct seems to me to have been very unbecoming.

If we cannot reward friends, it is something, at any rate, to be able to punish enemies.

For all these reasons, I am very anxious that Ld. Cowley shd. be undone, and I only see one way of effecting this object. Some years ago, when his salary was £9000 a year, he resigned because he said that he found it impossible to make both ends meet. In order to induce him to remain, they gave him £2000 a year more—without the consent of Parliament. If his salary were cut down he wd. probably resign. I daresay attempts will be made to reduce the expenses of this Embassy. Could you not make them successful?

Earle here accused Cowley of undue zeal for his chief: no such accusation is likely to be levelled against Earle. The letter was not only treacherous and spiteful but unpatriotic. Earle admitted that Cowley was 'honest and resolute', and that he had great influence over Napoleon III. Yet he was—from personal motives—anxious to see him undone. Fortunately his persuasions came to nothing. When the conservatives came into power in 1858 Lord Malmesbury pressed Cowley (who had resolved to resign) to remain in Paris.¹ Cowley's tenure of office at Paris lasted until July 1867—a little longer than the friendship between Earle and Disraeli.

On 4 March 1857 Ralph Earle had written, offering to become Disraeli's private secretary. The conservatives, however, did not have the opportunity of forming an administration: Palmerston appealed to the country. Earle at once wrote again to Disraeli (8 March 1857):

¹ Cowley to Clarendon, February 1858: F. A. Wellesley, *The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire* (London, 1928), p. 158.

I have not forgotten those kind and flattering words, with which you cheered me, when you were here. I would now remind you of them, as my excuse for writing whether you think it possible that, during the coming elections, any opportunity will be offered to me. If you have a moment to answer me, I should be glad if you would, at the same time, give me such practical information as I shd. require to guide my financial arrangements.

Disraeli advised Earle to come to London, where he hastened immediately. But nothing came of Earle's parliamentary ambitions: Palmerston won a great victory at the polls, and Earle's prospects seemed no better than before. He waited in London for some time, and on 2 July 1857 was writing to Disraeli about his hopes of securing a better diplomatic post, in St. Petersburg. But this too fell through, and he in due course returned to Paris. His correspondence with Disraeli was renewed, and on 26 October he produced a scheme for discrediting Palmerston by embroiling him with France, over the question of the union of Moldavia and Wallachia. What was wanted, declared Ralph, was 'some one to set the Emperor against Palmerston and Walewski against Cowley'.

It was indeed a French imbroglio which, most unexpectedly, unseated Palmerston. On 14 January 1858 an attempt was made on Napoleon III's life, by Orsini and his Italian confederates. Numerous bystanders were killed and injured, though Napoleon and Eugénie were themselves unscathed. The conspiracy had been hatched in England, the bombs manufactured in Birmingham. An outcry at once arose in France against Britain's harbouring such assassins. The British government admitted the justice of the French complaint, though objection was naturally made to some of the more violent anti-British ebullitions in France. '*We are a nuisance to Europe*', confessed Clarendon to Cowley, 'we have our laws and our systems and our policy and our extreme difficulties in making the slightest change, but these are internal affairs, and their external result is terror and danger to others, and people are therefore justified in voting

us a pest.'¹ Parliament was not sitting and the Opposition could not ask questions or demand that papers be presented: so the information which Ralph Earle at once began sending was of great importance. On 17 January he wrote to Disraeli:

The greatest excitement prevails at Paris. Great bitterness is expressed in *all circles* against England for harbouring the assassins. The Emperor himself feels strongly on this point, and the speeches which you read in the papers were delivered by the Presidents of the Senate and Corps Legislative at his instigation.

Lord Cowley having heard yesterday that the Emperor would make some strong allusion to the Hospitality offered by us to the Refugees, in his opening speech to-morrow, telegraphed to London to ask whether he might prevent this by promising that the Refugee question should receive the best attention of our Cabinet. The answer is not satisfactory. If the French govt. will give proofs of the guilt of the English Refugees the English govt. will take the matter into their serious consideration. The Emperor will show himself weak if he is contented with this.

I went yesterday with Lord Cowley to the Tuileries, where the Emperor received the Corps diplomatique. I heard the Empress tell the whole story. When they threw open the carriage doors after the Explosion she saw on one side unknown faces & thought them assassins, *which they probably were*, but as they found themselves opposite the police & guards & without their leader, they were awed and withdrew.

Poeri was arrested $\frac{1}{2}$ *an hour* before the Empr. arrived. Strange that the police did not warn him! The general belief is that if Poeri had not been arrested the plot wd. have succeeded.

Excuse my pencil, *I use it advisedly.*

On 26 January he wrote again:

To-day I have a great deal to report. In the first place the Cabinet has promised the Emperor a measure about the refugees, and they have instructed the law officers to see what can be done. They are, however, very nervous about public opinion in England and have implored the Emperor not to use threats and above all not to expect much from the promised bill. On the other hand the state of public opinion in France gives just cause for alarm. . . .

¹ Clarendon to Cowley, 16 January 1858: Wellesley, *Paris Embassy*, p. 148.

Parliament met on 4 February, and Palmerston gave notice that he intended to introduce a bill to amend the law of conspiracy. On 9 February the first reading was carried by a majority of 200 votes. But Walewski, the French foreign minister, had written a somewhat intemperate dispatch on the refugee question; and the British government (which regarded its substance, though not its tone, as justifiable) had failed to retort in kind. Instead, an attempt was made to persuade Walewski to write something in a more moderate style; and Ralph Earle reported to Disraeli on 15 February:

The fresh remonstrance about the addresses was made on the evening of Friday the 5th by Ld. Cowley, in a conversation with the Emperor. It was then that the apologetic dispatch was promised. Ld. Cowley ends his report by saying that Ministers must be prepared at any rate for coldness and, should another attempt be made on his life, for complete estrangement on the part of the Emperor. . . .

Appended to this letter was a note containing a series of arguments against the course pursued by the Palmerston government after the Orsini outrage. Meanwhile, opinion in Britain was hardening. Milner Gibson brought in a motion censuring the government for not answering Walewski's dispatch. On 19 February the government was defeated by 234 votes to 215; and the Palmerston ministry resigned.

Lord Derby failed to secure support from Gladstone and several other statesmen whom he approached; but he succeeded in forming a purely conservative ministry with Malmesbury as foreign secretary and Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Ralph Earle wrote to Disraeli as follows on 23 February 1858:

I hope you will not think that I am presuming upon my slight acquaintance with you, by venturing to offer you my services as Private Secretary. I need hardly say how delighted I should be at finding it still in your power to comply with this request, which, at any rate, I hope you will excuse.

Ralph Earle was anxious to conceal his connexion with Disraeli—a sentiment doubtless shared by Disraeli. So this letter was not sent direct to Disraeli, but *via* Sir John Pakington, the new First Lord of the Admiralty. Ralph simply told Pakington that he had met Disraeli at Paris. His application was successful; but he seems not to have abandoned immediately his hope of using this rather curious means of securing diplomatic promotion. In December 1858 he was agitating for the post of first paid attaché at Constantinople. 'It is very important that I should not be omitted in these changes', he wrote to Disraeli, 'and that the best arrangement shd. be made for me, as there will be no further moves, in the diplomacy, for a long time to come. I hope you will kindly give me your assistance once more.' Disraeli's influence with Malmesbury was apparently insufficient, for on 12 January 1859 Earle was writing to Disraeli:

To-day I receive a note from Bidwell, stating that Ld. Malmesbury cannot now give me Constantinople, & offering me, instead, an inferior appointment at Vienna.

Considering the position wh. I have held since the change of government—one often accepted by Members of Parliament—I don't know whether you will approve of my accepting a subordinate place in the Chancery of a foreign Mission.

Disraeli seems to have advised Earle to pocket his pride, and he was nominated second paid attaché at Vienna,¹ though it is not clear whether he undertook his duties there. At the general election of April and May 1859, Ralph Earle became member for Berwick;² whereupon he resigned his Vienna attachéship, and abandoned his diplomatic career. He never lost his interest in foreign affairs; but, from now onwards, it was the political rather than the diplomatic backstairs in which he delighted.

Disraeli seems to have been thoroughly satisfied with

¹ Obituary of Ralph Earle in *The Times*, 14 June 1879.

² He resigned the seat in August 1859, under an arrangement with his opponent: Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (2 vols., 1929), i. 1634.

Ralph Earle as secretary. On 20 May 1859 he wrote to Mrs. Brydges Willyams: 'The first secretary, Mr. Earle, has been returned to Parliament, tho' he is only 23, but a man in matured thought and power of observation. Without his assistance I could not get through my work. I can trust him with interviews. He can see men and manage them.'¹ Earle's usefulness to Disraeli was noticed in the political world. 'He was a most useful servant to Disraeli', wrote Sir William Fraser; 'for he was capable, not only of repeating to him what the public feeling of the day was, but he had quite enough of the statesman in him to be able to offer advice, which Disraeli would be sure to listen to, and appreciate; a subtle mind; and great natural ability.'² Disraeli had an idealistic view of the relations that should exist between a minister and his secretary. In his *Endymion* he wrote: 'The relations between a Minister and his secretary are, or at least should be, among the finest that can subsist between two individuals. Except the married state, there is none in which so great a confidence is involved, in which more forbearance ought to be exercised, or more sympathy ought to exist.' Holding these opinions Disraeli would hardly have retained Earle as his secretary for eight years, without holding him in affection and esteem.

So intimate are the relations between minister and secretary, so unreserved the daily intercourse between them, that surviving evidence on this topic is necessarily scanty. Ralph Earle's letters to Disraeli—frequent while he was in Paris—now became comparatively rare. Only when Ralph went abroad, as Disraeli's agent, was the correspondence resumed on its former scale. Disraeli and Malmesbury disliked each other, and Disraeli was convinced that Malmesbury was an incompetent foreign secretary. He considered Napoleon III's ambitions not only a danger to the peace of Europe, but also a potential danger to the security of tenure of the conservative administration. Palmerston had fallen as a result of his efforts to please Napoleon on the refugee question; and

² Fraser, *Disraeli and his Day*, pp. 364-5.

Napoleon could not be expected to regard his supplanter with cordiality. As far back as 21 February 1858, Ralph Earle had written to Disraeli: 'Unless you think the opposition of the French Press and Govt. an element of strength at this moment, I would suggest your writing a letter to Fould to say that your sentiments towards the Emperor are unchanged.' In December 1858, Disraeli dispatched Ralph to Paris with two objects: first, to wean Napoleon from his friendship with Palmerston; and, second, to persuade him to postpone his designs on Italy (presuming he meant war) until Disraeli had got his budget safely through Parliament. On 20 December Earle wrote to Disraeli:

We were evidently off the rails, thanks to Ld. Cowley's reports declaring that the Italian schemes were abandoned. If we can only succeed, even at the expense of promises of future co-operation, in keeping him (Napoleon) quiet for three months, a great deal will have been effected.¹ He is certainly less dangerous in Italy than elsewhere, and I don't think it in our interest, even as conservatives of the Balance of Power, that the Austrian domination shd. be maintained.

This is almost the only European War in which we could remain neutral. In fact, neutrality wd. appear inevitable. In fact, I see no danger in encouraging the visions, provided they be discarded for the present.

Earle had two interviews with the Emperor, and on 24 December wrote a long account of the second to Disraeli.² Disraeli did his best to convince Derby of the seriousness of the danger of war in Italy between France and Austria. In this, Disraeli was certainly right, though he was hampered by the unofficial nature of his information. Derby wrote that he thought that Malmesbury,

not knowing from what sources you derive your information, . . . is inclined, when accounts differ, to place greater reliance, which is not unnatural, on his recognised official channels of information than

¹ In an earlier letter Earle wrote: 'I gave him (Napoleon) to understand that you did not care what he did, provided he kept quiet till after the Budget.'

² This letter is printed by Monypenny and Buckle, i. 1618-20.

on private, and, so far as he is concerned, anonymous intelligence which reaches you. I do not know how far your obligations to your correspondent would allow of your removing this ground of partial mistrust.¹

Mr. Buckle justifiably doubts whether 'Disraeli's amateur diplomacy and spasmodic interventions were calculated to benefit our foreign policy during this period'.² War broke out between Austria and France at the end of April; the British general election did not provide the conservatives with a majority; and on 10 June 1859 the government was defeated on the address to the Crown. Palmerston, Russell, and Gladstone came in, to help solve the Italian problem; and Disraeli went into opposition for the next seven years. His budget for 1859—which had concerned him so much at the time of Earle's interviews with Napoleon—was left to his successor. Ralph Earle had proved his usefulness during Disraeli's year of office. He had, for example, produced a valuable memorandum on the financial state of the country, and had kept Disraeli in regular communication with Delane of *The Times*.³ He remained Disraeli's private secretary during the years of opposition.

In 1860 there was an uproar in Britain against the French proposal to annex Savoy and Nice. A strange fatality seemed to connect Palmerston's career with that of Napoleon III. He had been ejected from office for approving Napoleon's *coup d'état*; his government had fallen over the Conspiracy to Murder Bill. Disraeli seems to have hoped that the existence of Palmerston's government might again be endangered by a French question; and Ralph Earle went to Paris to fish in troubled waters. On 19 April 1860, Earle had an interview with Napoleon lasting forty minutes; and he wrote an account of it to Disraeli on the same day:

When I was introduced into the Emperor's Cabinet, he began the conversation by saying that he was sorry so long a period had elapsed

¹ Derby to Disraeli, 8 January 1859: Monypenny and Buckle, i. 1624.

² *Ibid.*, i. 1629.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 1653, 1551.

since my last visit and then at once plunged into the great business by exclaiming—‘The relations between the two Countries are, I fear, in a very bad state.’ I replied that, notwithstanding the present complications, I was of opinion that recent events had shown the great strength of the sentiment which bound England to France. This view I enforced by a sketch of the Parliamentary campaign, the conclusion at which I arrived being this—that whatsoever might be the language of individuals there was no large body of the people prepared to withhold the greatest sacrifices wh. might be necessary to the maintenance of the alliance, and I therefore urged that the Emperor might safely adopt a policy of resistance to the demands (*réclamations*) of the English Cabinet.

The Emperor said that nothing could be more ridiculous than the clamour wh. had been raised about the Swiss annexation. . . . He then went back to the Conspiracy Bill & expressed his displeasure at the conduct of the Conservative party during the last few years.

I did not want to appear your Emissary and therefore I admitted that the Conservative party had perhaps allowed themselves to succumb too readily to Austrian influence, but, with respect to yourself, I said that it was but fair to recognise that even in taking a course, which was apparently at variance with the interests of France, you had neglected no opportunity of expressing your confidence in the sincerity of the Imperial Govt. (*s’était toujours attaché à faire ressortir la loyauté de la politique de l’Empereur*).

‘While upon this subject,’ I continued, ‘I cannot help observing that the want of candour with wh. Y.M.’s Govt. has been treated by the English Cabinet has not been sufficiently exposed in any of the official documents hitherto published by the French Foreign Office, and I have ventured to draw up a note of some points which, in my opinion, ought to be dwelt upon in some dispatch, wh. may be given to the world.’ I gave the Note (which contains a *précis* of the argument with wh. you are so familiar) to the Emperor, and he read it twice with much attention, then thanked me for it and said that he wd. speak of it to Thouvenel. . . .

Before leaving him, I suggested that, as it was desirable that the English people should not be unaware of the mutual dependence of the two countries, and as it was chiefly in the East that the alliance of France was indispensable to us,—I suggested that it might be expedient to make this conspicuous by some action in the East.

The Emperor, at once, entered into the idea, and asked how it could be done?

I suggested a revival of the Suez scheme.¹ He asked me, musingly, what was thought of it in England? I said that the movements of France in Egypt were watched with the same suspicion as was exhibited here with respect to our policy in Sicily. I then reminded H.M. of the differences wh. exist in the Cabinet, on this question, as they were revealed in the course of the debate, on Roebuck's motion, in 1858.²

This letter reveals an astonishing degree of treachery on the part of Ralph Earle: nor is it so readily excusable on grounds of youth and inexperience, as his behaviour when an attaché at the Paris embassy. He positively incited Napoleon III to adopt an anti-British policy. He supplied him with arguments; with a précis for a state paper; and with assurances that his policy was likely to be successful. In the hope of embroiling Napoleon and Palmerston's ministry, and using this as a lever for ejecting that ministry, Ralph Earle forgot that France and Britain might become seriously embroiled in the process. Here statesmanship and diplomacy degenerate into the worst kind of faction and intrigue. Precisely how deeply Disraeli was involved in all this must remain a matter of conjecture. At the very least he was an accessory after the fact; and the chances are that he was as deeply involved as his private secretary.

In the winter of 1860-1, Ralph Earle was again on the Continent—this time in Italy. On 28 December 1860 he wrote to Disraeli from Florence, giving him an impression of the state of Italy, and warning him that the statements of Hudson, the British minister at Turin, 'must be received with a certain doubt, unless corroborated by independent testimony of events'. In February 1861, Earle visited Rome and wrote to Disraeli: 'The Cardinal Minister of the Holy Father sends you a great many messages of compliment, and

¹ Palmerston's suspicion of the Suez Canal scheme was notorious.

² Carefully selected passages of this letter are printed in Monypenny and Buckle, *ii.* 54-5. These passages are not reprinted above.

his Sovereign blessed me on hearing me mentioned as your secretary.¹ Ralph followed this up by visiting Cardinal Wiseman on his return to England. Wiseman assured him that he would do what he could to secure the catholic vote for the conservative party. The cardinal observed 'that we were quite right in looking to the R.C.s for our majority for they could give it us. If there was any prospect of a government being formed that would carry out a respectable foreign policy, the catholic constituents and their members would support it'.² But all these intrigues were useless: Palmerston's popularity was undiminished, and at the general election of 1865 he again secured a majority. Ralph Earle,³ renewing his parliamentary ambitions, became member for Maldon.

Palmerston died on 18 October 1865, before the new parliament had met. John Russell became Prime Minister. He introduced a Reform Bill, which was pertinaciously attacked by Lowe and the Adullamites, and by Disraeli and the conservatives. Disraeli entered into negotiations with the Adullamites, using Ralph Earle as his intermediary.⁴ The ministry's difficulties grew, it was defeated on 18 June 1866, and on 26 June its resignation was announced. 'Your chance has been a long time in coming,' wrote Delane to Earle, 'pray don't throw it away now that you have got it.' At the same time he indicated 'that I look to you for information as to your progress in the formation of a Ministry'. Earle was very active in the negotiations that led to the formation of Derby's third government: a little too active, apparently, for Disraeli's taste, since Disraeli accused him of interfering.

¹ Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 59.

² Ralph Earle to Disraeli, 26 April 1861, *ibid.* Disraeli's manoeuvres for the Roman Catholic vote were rendered nugatory by Derby's views on the subject: *ibid.*, 149.

³ In August 1864 Ralph had a dangerous attack of typhoid fever at Kreutznach. He was nursed by his elder brother, Charles. See Mrs. C. W. Earle, *Memoirs and Memories* (London, 1911), pp. 253-4. 'He was always very delicate'—Sir Lionel Earle.

⁴ Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 169-70.

This is the first sign of a rift between the two men. Ralph wrote apologetically:¹ 'As to "interfering" with the subordinate offices I have made my suggestions to you and to you alone, knowing well that you could separate the dross from the gold—or rather, I shd. say, from the lead, for I am not sufficiently confident to suppose that there is, or ever has been, any gold in my ideas.' Earle was himself rewarded for his nine years' devotion to Disraeli—a devotion which, from the above evidence, seems to have become a little embarrassing to his employer. Ralph became parliamentary secretary of the Poor Law Board, under Gathorne-Hardy, on 14 July 1866. His salary was £1100 a year.² He seems to have been fully satisfied. 'I don't know how to thank you enough,' he wrote to Disraeli.³ 'The Secretary of the Poor Law Board does *not* vacate. I think it would suit me better than the Admiralty, perhaps, as a contest would be disagreeable.' He went on to make suggestions as to his successor as private secretary. But Disraeli had his own ideas on the subject, and appointed Montagu Corry, a young man whom he had met the previous year.⁴ Corry began his new duties on 12 July 1866.

Disraeli and Montagu Corry were soon on terms of greater intimacy than ever Disraeli and Earle had been. A contemporary observer wrote that he became Disraeli's

one indispensable man. He had been the social link that connected Lord Beaconsfield with a world which he surveyed as a contemptuous critic rather than inhabited as a born denizen. He gave the Prime Minister all the gossip of the clubs and all the chatter of the drawing-rooms. . . . He was the daily companion and confidant of the great

¹ The letter is merely dated 'Wednesday'. 4 July 1866 is the most probable date.

² Poor Law Board 'Office List', 1 October 1866. George Sclater Booth became parliamentary secretary on 23 March 1867 at a salary of £1000: 'Office List', 1 April 1867.

³ The letter is merely dated 'Friday'. 6 July 1866 is the most probable date. See Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 180.

⁴ For the circumstances of their meeting, see Sir Algernon West, *Recollections, 1832 to 1886* (2 vols., 1899), i. 240-1, and Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 153-4.^c

man in his walks, in his visits, even in his meditations. . . . He was, in a word, the model of secretaries.¹

Disraeli, having provided for Earle, considered his obligation at an end, and intimate relations ceased. Earle was again on the Continent in August, and on the 11th wrote to Disraeli from Brussels. One phrase is significant: 'If an Autumn session were unavoidable, we should, at least, have the advantage of being able to feel our way about Reform, without committing ourselves in a Queen's Speech'. This shows that he had no real objection to Reform—the subject on which he later spoke against Disraeli in the House of Commons. The Earle-Disraeli correspondence came to an end, and there is every indication that a coolness, though not yet an open rupture, developed between them during the winter of 1866-7.

The principal causes of the quarrel between Disraeli and Earle are now fairly clear. Drummond-Wolff wrote that 'thinking that this appointment (Secretaryship of the Poor Law Board), which entailed no great labour, was given him so that he might combine his Secretarial with his Parliamentary work, Mr. Earle used to go daily to see his chief. Mr. Disraeli, however, having appointed another private secretary . . . wished to dispense with Mr. Earle's services and did not welcome these continual visits.'² In February 1867 Earle complained bitterly to Rose, a personal friend of Disraeli. He accused Disraeli 'of altered demeanour, of snubbing him before subordinates, and of excluding him, in spite of ten years of devotion, from his confidence'.³ The occasion for the quarrel was, probably, some demand on the part of Ralph for a more important post. Early in March 1867, Lord Cranborne, Lord Carnarvon, and General Peel resigned from the cabinet. Disraeli announced these resigna-

¹ T. H. S. Escott, 'Lord Carnarvon's Resignation', *Gentleman's Magazine*, ccxlii (1878). 357-8.

² Drummond-Wolff, *Rambling Recollections*, i. 64.

³ Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 262. I have not been able to trace the source of this information, but there is no reason to doubt it.

tions on 4 March.¹ The conservative party was near revolt on the Reform question: but Lord Cranborne made no attempt to cause a split.² If Ralph Earle had had honest doubts on the Reform question this is when he would have resigned: but he delayed for a fortnight—and the assumption is that, in the ensuing reshuffle, he had hoped for promotion. On 18 or 19 March he may have reproached Disraeli on this score; and a bitter quarrel certainly occurred. Gathorne-Hardy, Earle's chief at the Poor Law Board, noted in his diary on 20 March: 'Earle sent me word last night that he has resigned. He has not done much at the office, but I have no complaint to make. I fancy his grievance is not Reform, but some quarrel with Disraeli. Each is bitter against the other.'³

Ralph Earle not only resigned, but on 11 April 1867 made a speech in the Commons against the Reform Bill.⁴ Earle was no great speaker:⁵ he did himself much harm by his effort, and Disraeli none.⁶ Sir William Fraser has an account of this affair:

Ralph Earle, M.P., who had been for many years confidential private secretary to Disraeli, quarrelled with him for some reason that has not been explained; and which may never be known. He considered himself to have been harshly treated in being dismissed from Disraeli's confidence on receiving an official appointment; and though possessing much cleverness and a considerable amount of good sense, made the great error of attacking Disraeli in the House of

¹ Hansard, 3rd Series, clxxxv. 1309-10. Pakington, Henry Corry, and the Duke of Buckingham replaced the retiring members.

² Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury* (5 vols., 1921), i. 249-51.

³ Alfred E. Gathorne-Hardy, *Gathorne-Hardy, first Earl of Cranbrook: A Memoir, with Extracts from his Diary and Correspondence* (1910), p. 203.

⁴ Hansard, 3rd Series, clxxxvi. 1574-5.

⁵ Other occasions on which Earle spoke were 28 May 1866 (clxxxiii. 1406-7), 11 June 1866 (clxxxiv. 176), 25 July 1866 (*ibid.*, 1454), and 22 February 1867 (clxxxv. 811).

⁶ Lord Spencer later told Sir Lionel Earle that Disraeli had said to him: 'I am not so much surprised at Ralph's want of political morality, but I am surprised at his want of political sagacity'.

Commons. A more painful exhibition was never witnessed. Earle had no power of speaking; he addressed the House of Commons just before a Division, when it is always impatient, pouring out his invectives¹ against his late master in a feeble manner, and producing, as might be supposed, the effect of rendering himself absurd. The House knew nothing of the circumstances of the quarrel, and cared as little. Earle had, of course, plenty of enemies, who turned upon him, and upbraided him for what appeared an act of unprovoked ingratitude. He never gave me the slightest hint as to the cause of his quarrel with a man whom I know he admired enthusiastically. . . . I had not seen Earle since his *esclandre*. I was at an afternoon party, given by Sir Charles Buxton, at the Castle Hotel, Richmond. In the crowd assembled on the lawn, I observed him: he seemed to feel shy as to speaking to me: I said: 'Good Morning!' He came up to me: I give his precise words: 'Disraeli and I have quarrelled, as you know: the quarrel is absolutely hopeless: it can never be made up under any circumstances: I know what your feelings have always been about Disraeli; and I know, of course, what they must be about this Reform Bill. I think it right to tell you that I was behind the scenes the whole time; I know everything that occurred. It was not Disraeli's Bill; it was Lord Derby's.' I never saw him again. He has long been dead.²

There is evidence from Disraeli's side, too, as to the extreme bitterness of the quarrel. On 18 April 1867 he wrote to Lord Beauchamp:

The only black spot in this great business, and which I would not notice to anyone but yourself, is the treason of Earle! I have known him for ten years, and tho' warned from the first by the Cowleys, whom he treated as he has treated me, I utterly disregarded their intimations, and ascribed them all to prejudice and misapprehension.

I have worked for his welfare more earnestly than for my own, and do not believe that I ever, even in the most trying times, gave him a hasty or unkind word. I loaded him with favours, and among them introduced him to you. I am ashamed of my want of discrimination.³

The bitterness of Disraeli's tone in his correspondence was probably surpassed in his conversation; and it is hardly sur-

¹ 'Invectives' is certainly too strong a word.

² Sir William Fraser, *Disraeli and his Day*, pp. 363-5.

³ Monypenny and Buckle, ii. 262.

prising that Ralph Earle decided that he had no political future. He abandoned his seat at Maldon in 1868.

Ralph Earle turned from politics to finance. In the summer of 1869 he was in Constantinople, acting for Baron Hirsch, and negotiating with the Turkish government for a railway concession.¹ He was successful. Baron Hirsch is reputed to have made a million pounds; and Earle was given ten thousand for his share in the transaction.² Earle was evidently a shrewd business man for, ten years later, he left £40,000 to his elder brother Charles.³ He retained some of his political interests. His sister-in-law, Mrs. C. W. Earle (a niece of Lord Clarendon), was a friend of John Morley who, while editor of the *Fortnightly Review*,⁴ accepted some contributions from Ralph. In November 1876 an article was published on 'The Eastern Situation'.⁵ No marked bias against Disraeli was displayed, but its tone was decidedly anti-Turkish. In October 1878 an article appeared on 'Mr. Gladstone and the New Equilibrium'.⁶ Gladstone was criticized freely, and an occasional phrase displayed an anti-Disraeli tendency. For example: 'When Protestants emancipate the Roman Catholics, or Protectionists repeal the Corn Laws, or Conservative ministers propose household suffrage,

¹ Baron Hirsch left an unenviable reputation for double-dealing. Sir Lionel Earle informs me: 'The Turks agreed to pay so much a mile. Hirsch consequently avoided all Tunnels which of course largely lessened the cost and increased the Mileage.' R. B. Macpherson wrote that in 1877 the Roumelian railway went only about twenty miles beyond Philippopolis. 'The original contract provided for the extension of the line as far as Sofia, but it is said that Baron Hirsch, the contractor, found that the latter part of the contract being through mountainous country, would not pay him so well, and therefore quietly ignored it' (*Under the Red Crescent, or Ambulance Adventures in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8*, London, 1885, p. 35). Ralph Earle's connexions in the business world evidently need further investigation; but it seems likely that his early training in political rascality stood him in good stead.

² Mrs. C. W. Earle, *Memoirs and Memories*, p. 259, and Sir Lionel Earle's recollections.

³ Sir Lionel Earle's recollections.

⁴ Mrs. C. W. Earle, *Memoirs and Memories*, p. 300.

⁵ The *Fortnightly Review*, vol. xx, new series, pp. 651-70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv, new series, pp. 568-88.

we know that the end of their reign is at hand'.¹ Though Ralph Earle thus kept his hostility to Disraeli well within bounds, that hostility was not forgotten by his contemporaries. In 1878 a series of articles entitled 'The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield' appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*.² These articles, which showed great ability, displayed the strongest animus against Disraeli. They were so generally attributed to Ralph Earle that on 15 June 1878 he wrote to *The Times* denying their authorship or any connexion with them whatsoever.³ The general impression given in fact, by Ralph Earle's career after 1867, is that his attack on Disraeli of 11 April of that year was so complete a failure that he did not care to renew it.

Ralph Earle died at Soden in Nassau on 10 June 1879,⁴ and was buried there.⁵ He was only in his forty-fifth year, and had already been out of political life for eleven years. In his brief diplomatic and political career he had shown great ability. He had gone far, and might have gone much farther, but for his overweening ambition. Much that is reprehensible emerges from a study of the transactions in which he engaged; but Disraeli must take his share of the responsibility—indeed the greater share, since he was the older and more experienced man. There are many hints and allusions in the Earle-Disraeli correspondence; there are many half-explained incidents in the relations between these two men. But, in spite of the obscurities that still remain, the facts that emerge are not without importance, since they belong to a type of transaction that is seldom open to the scrutiny of the historian.

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 587.

² These articles were frequently quoted by T. P. O'Connor in *Lord Beaconsfield, A Biography* (People's edn., 1879).

³ *The Times*, 17 June 1878, p. 12. Messrs. Chapman and Hall, who published the *Fortnightly Review* in 1878, inform me that they have no record of the authorship of the articles.

⁴ *Annual Register*, 1879, pp. 201-2. Obituaries were published in *The Times*, 14 June 1879, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 June 1879.

⁵ Information from Sir Lionel Earle, who failed to find his grave in 1937.

GERMAN COLONIAL PROJECTS ON THE MOSQUITO COAST, 1844-1848¹

The name 'Mosquito Coast' was sometimes applied to the whole eastern seaboard of Nicaragua, and even to the adjoining region of Mosquitia in Honduras. In 1846 Lord Palmerston defined it as stretching from Cape Gracias à Dios in the north to the San Juan river in the south. Eventually, however, the 'Mosquito Coast' was limited to a length of about 225 miles—from the Wawa river in the north ($14^{\circ} 10' \text{N.}$) to the Rana river in the south ($11^{\circ} 45' \text{N.}$). The capital and only important town is Bluefields or Blewfields.

The first settlement took place as early as 1630 and was undertaken by an English Chartered Company, of which the Earl of Warwick was the chairman, and John Pym the treasurer. The settlement did not thrive. But later in the century an English protectorate over the Mosquito Indians was claimed. This 'protectorate' was always rather shadowy; but the government of Jamaica remained on friendly terms with the 'King of the Mosquitos' (or Moscos Indians) and in 1844 the 'protectorate' was reaffirmed.

Meanwhile, in 1838, a Constituent Assembly at Managua had declared the independence of Nicaragua, and the new state claimed that the Mosquito Coast lay within its boundaries. Spain also contested British claims in this area; and the United States of America insisted that the Monroe Doctrine (reaffirmed by President Polk in December 1845) should not be infringed. No Great Power was for the moment anxious to adopt the responsibility of policing, protecting, and administering this unhealthy coast, with its backward natives of mixed Indian, negro, and pirate

¹ Reprinted from *The English Historical Review*, May 1944.

blood.¹ But several Great Powers understood the strategic importance of the district, and particularly of San Juan del Norte (Greytown). This town lay at the Atlantic terminus of the route up the river San Juan and across Lake Nicaragua, whence access to the Pacific is easy; and the potentialities of this route were at least as great as those of the route across the Isthmus of Panama. The Mosquitian king's flag was hoisted at San Juan del Norte in 1848; and in 1855 the town was seized by the American filibuster, Colonel Kinney, who later joined in William Walker's ill-fated attempt on Nicaragua. Relations between the U.S.A. and Great Britain, though often strained, were prevented from becoming dangerously so by the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850. This treaty, though doubtfully worded, and the cause of more than one dispute, displayed a reasonable capacity for compromise on both sides.

This was not a period of vigorous British colonial expansion. Many statesmen regarded the colonies (as did Disraeli in his younger days) as 'millstones round our necks'. Britain therefore tended to abandon colonial liabilities rather than to foster them; and she did not, indeed, press very strongly her undoubted claims on the Mosquito Coast.² But the government of Jamaica was naturally interested in the strategic position in the Caribbean Sea, and was anxious to maintain British claims on the Mosquito shore. In 1844 the home government was persuaded to appoint Mr. Patrick

¹ In an interesting general dispatch, dated 31 December 1844, from P. Walker, British Agent at Bluefields, to Aberdeen, this backwardness is ascribed in the main to the rivalry between the Spaniards and the Mosquito Indians. Public Record Office, Foreign Office 53/1 Mosquito. Cited hereafter as P.R.O., F.O.

² Britain delegated her protectorate over the Mosquitos to Honduras in 1859, but this proved unsatisfactory, and in 1860 she ceded to Nicaragua all her claims, from Cape Gracias à Dios to Greytown. Autonomy was to be granted to the Mosquito Indians, and the king was to receive £1000 a year. This grant was discontinued by the Nicaraguan authorities in 1864, and the Indians surrendered their autonomy in 1894 after some small resistance. A British vessel, H.M.S. *Cleopatra*, landed some men to protect the last king of the Mosquitos; but the matter was dropped.

Walker as H.M.'s Agent and Consul-General at a salary of 1000 a year. He arrived at Bluefields on 9 July 1844.¹

Patrick Walker was a man of great vigour and ability, who improved the government of the Mosquito protectorate, and—had he lived longer—might have consolidated British influence there. One of the strangest problems with which he had to deal, during his three and a half years of office, was a series of colonial projects by Prussian citizens—and some destitute Prussian emigrants who actually appeared at Bluefields. No one at this date took Prussia or her emigration problems seriously; but if she had, at this date, secured a foothold on this strategically important territory, it might have proved an event of world importance. The revolutions of 1848 gave Germany plenty to think about at home: and these Central American projects were dropped—and have been almost completely forgotten, even by the industrious colonial historians of Germany.²

Dispatches and letters preserved in the Public Record Office, London, among the Foreign Office archives illustrate all the elements of an early stage of colonial activity.³ The royal prince, Charles of Prussia, who is interested in colonial projects; the business man (in this case a baron) of doubtful commercial, or other, probity; the rascally sea-captain who deposits a band of poverty-stricken emigrants on a fever-ridden shore and departs without paying his bills, but with an emigrant young woman still in his cabin; the pious Prince Schönberg-

¹ Canning to Walker, 19 March 1844, and Walker to Aberdeen, No. 1, 10 July 1844: P.R.O., F.O. 53/1.

² A contemporary account of the proposed scheme is contained in W. Ketschmer, *Der deutsche Colonisierungs-Projekt an der Mosquito-Küste* (1845).

A brief and not wholly accurate reference to the failure of the project is made in T. Sommerlad: *Der Deutsche Kolonialgedanke und sein Werden im 19 Jahrhundert* (Halle a/S. 1918), pp. 45-6; and a passing allusion to it is made in Wilhelm Roscher: *Kolonien, Kolonialpolitik und Auswanderung* (1856), p. 360. Treitschke, in his *History of Germany in the 19th Century*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, vol. 7, p. 274, gives some account of the more ambitious scheme for a German colony in Texas, but says nothing about the Mosquito affair.

³ Extracts from these documents were printed by Dr. G. B. Henderson in his article in *The English Historical Review* (May 1944) but are not reproduced in this Memorial Volume.

Waldenburg, who is interested in missionary endeavour, and the Moravian Brethren who propose to save the souls of the Mosquito Indians. These are all familiar figures in early colonial history; and they are all to be found, operating from Germany, and in the narrow strip of the Mosquito shore, within the space of four years. Given slightly different circumstances, this activity might well have resulted in a German colony forty years before the first was founded—and in the Americas instead of in Africa.

* * * * *

These German colonial projects on the Mosquito Coast have been little noticed by historians in the United States of America. Some account of them is, however, to be found in the late Professor Marcus Lee Hansen's *The Atlantic Migration*, 1607-1860, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger (Harvard University Press, 1940). The relevant passage (p. 236) runs as follows, and is quoted with its original footnotes in square brackets:

A special impulse for the [German colonial] endeavour resulted from the distress caused by a local crop failure in 1844. Under the patronage of Prince Karl of Prussia, a Commission visited that part of Central America known as the Mosquito Coast to investigate its possibilities for settlement. The report, published in 1845, was favorable; and in Berlin and Königsberg societies were formed to foster a systematic colonisation. At this point the Government intervened under the law of 1820.¹ The public meetings called to arouse interest were banned, and Prince Karl and others high in the scientific and political world were forced to withdraw their support.² Though this ended the open activities in Berlin, a small group persisted and, joining with the Society at Königsberg, purchased from English traders a tract of land near Bluefields, on the coast of Nicaragua.³ In high hope

¹ This law imposed heavy penalties on anyone found guilty of inducing citizens to emigrate.

² [Hansen, footnote 36 to Chap. x: *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nov. 10, 24, 1845; *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nov. 14, 1845.]

³ [Hansen, footnote 37 to Chap. x: *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 April 1846; *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 December 1845; *Geschichte der preussisch-deutschen Handelspolitik*, 316-7.] The purchase was invalid, since the 'traders' possessed no true right to the lands they professed to sell. (The history of German commercial policy to which Professor Hansen refers is that by Dr. Alfred Zimmermann published in 1892—Editor).

a ship was despatched in the spring of 1846. Disaster did not await its arrival. The ship was wrecked farther up the coast and when the passengers finally reached Bluefields their spirit of adventure had evaporated. The prospective settlers died or dispersed, and the traders secured an annulment of the grant.¹ The project was, as had been foretold, not a colony but a graveyard.²

This description of activities within Prussia is readily confirmed, and the evidence of the newspapers cited by the late Professor Hansen seems adequate for this purpose. But German newspapers would seem, from motives of ordinary prudence, hardly an adequate source for the obscure events and the obscurer politics of the Mosquito Coast. It is not therefore surprising to learn of a shipwreck that never occurred, and of land grants that were never made—or, if made, were made when the grantor was (as authentic documents show) in a state of inebriation! This is an excellent example of the danger of using newspaper material to prove any question of fact whatsoever, without confirmatory evidence from other sources. Had Professor Hansen lived to bring his own meticulous and invaluable researches to the point of publication, he would probably have taken steps to avert this criticism. But, given the book as it stands, the criticism is there, and it has to be made. The documents about the Mosquito shore in the Public Record Office have therefore not only some intrinsic interest and importance, but also some value as an illustration of one of the fundamental principles of historical research.

¹ [Hansen, footnote 38 to Chap. x: *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 May, 21 May, 24 October, 6 December, 1846; 14 February, 1847. A.A. III R.I. Aus Eur 11 Vol. 111 No. 883 (clipping from the *Morning Post*, 22 January 1849).] The documents that follow show that there was no shipwreck. The 'traders' secured no annulment of the grant, but were, on the contrary, ousted from their own illegitimate claims.

² [Hansen, footnote 39 to Chap. x: *Morgenblatt für Gebildete Leser*, 27 February 1846.]

SOME LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE
KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN, PRESERVED AT
VALETTA, MALTA¹

The British people are well aware of the severity with which Malta was bombed: and Valetta still presents, in places, a sadly war-shattered appearance. But the Malta Public Library (the 'Regia Bibliotheca Melitensis') has survived, and the manuscripts and other material preserved there are undamaged. The present writer, during a recent visit to Malta, was introduced by the librarian, Chevalier Hannibal P. Scicluna, to that remarkable collection of documents, the archives of the Knights of St. John. These papers have been extensively worked on only as regards the early period, when the Order was operating in the Holy Land, Cyprus, and Rhodes. The material relating to the later period, during which the Knights stayed in Malta and continued to play an important part in Mediterranean history, has hardly been touched.

There is no Chair of History in the University of Malta. Italian scholars are no strangers to the island; but British scholars are rare visitors. Small attention has been devoted to the archives of the Hospitallers, and money seems to be lacking to calendar and index them. They are not, indeed, in a condition in which scholars might be expected to work on them profitably and add the information they contain to the common stock of historical knowledge.

In the absence of a local History Department, what work has been done has been the result of the zeal and devotion to duty of successive librarians—Monsignor Alfredo Mifsud and Chevalier Hannibal P. Scicluna. The latter wrote, as far back as April 1911:

¹ Reprinted from *The Mariner's Mirror*, April 1946.

The tendency of modern historical research is the disclosure of original documents with which to support statements made in connexion with any event. With very few exceptions, writers of the history of Malta, so far as I am aware, have made statements and quoted passages without citing the sources of their information. This, therefore, in my opinion, necessitates the re-writing of a new history of our most interesting Island, founded on documentary evidence and conducted in the light of modern historical research.

The above extract is from a brochure: *Some Important Documents of the Archives of the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem and of Malta* (The Empire Press, Malta, 1931: reprint from *Archivum Melitense*, 1912). This brochure gives a description of the seventeen categories into which the Malta Archives are divided, and is a useful preliminary list. The approach (as shown by the above extract) is always from the point of view of the history of Malta. Yet there is not a European or Mediterranean state on the history of which some additional light may not be thrown by this collection of manuscripts.

A book which merits special mention is Mgr. A. Mifsud's *Knights Hospitallers of the Venerable Tongue of England*—printed in Malta during the last war, and not easy of access in Britain. This is the only serious work so far printed which has made extensive use of the material relating to England in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The number of errata, both detected and undetected, is large. Moreover, the MS. material preserved at Valetta is the only MS. material used; and it is an elementary principle of historical research that the information derived from one series of papers should be checked and balanced against information derived from other sources. Considering all the circumstances, it is a most commendable work which should be better known. But, especially in its editing of documents, it is not always up to modern standards of scholarship, and it is in no sense definitive.

It is perhaps worth noting, in parenthesis, that there is a 'Historical Archives of Malta Committee' in Great Britain,

under the Chairmanship of Professor F. M. Powicke. This Committee (the labours of which were interrupted by the war) had insufficient time to produce anything substantial. Its interest was confined to MSS. relating to Malta preserved in Great Britain. Thus, both at the Maltese and British ends (and the thorough student would wish to work at both) much work remains to be done.

Even a few days' study amongst the MSS. in the Malta Public Library revealed many letters of interest and importance, hitherto unpublished, or printed only in Mgr. A. Mifsud's book. As might be expected, many of these are of predominantly naval significance; and it is proposed to quote a few of them, as samples of the riches that these archives contain.

In a volume which contains principally letters from sovereigns, there is an interesting communication from Sir William Penn to the Grand Master.¹ It was written 'Aboard the State of England their Admiral Shipp the *Fairfax* this 29 June 1651'. It runs as follows:

Most Eminent S^r,

Not long since my occasions drawing mee to the Golletta of Tunis, I have found the Consull of our nation and his estates under Imprisonment and Sequestration, by reason of the Captivity of some Turks and their Goods, taken by your squadron of Gallyes, out of a small shipp of ours, on the 16th of Aprill last past. And conceiving that the Jerusalemite Order intends not (by any hostile Act) to prejudice our nation and infringe the Amity which hath been and is between them, I doe by this bearer the said Consull, who comes expressly to your Eminency with all possible effect recommend the restitution of those Turkes and Goods, which (now having traffique with them) must necessarily transport. And if by means of such necessity our Merchants should bee subject to such deep inconveniences what Resentment the state of England may thereuppon make, I cannot conclude. But I will

¹ Malta Public Library, Bibl. MS. 929, Arch. 57, Liber Epistolarum: 'Lettere Originali: Scritte al Gran Maestro solo, et al Gran Maestro e Consiglio, dai Re d'Inghilterra e di Polonia, dal Ducca di Baviera, dal Marchese di Brandenburg, dall' Arciduca d'Austria, dal Principe d'Oranges . . . etc. etc.' This letter is to be found in Mifsud, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-8, footnote.

hope that all damage and Prejudice may be prevented by the Goodnesse, wisdom and prudence of your Eminency.

To whom wishing Encrease of all Splendor and Greatnesse,
I remain

Most Eminent Sr,

Aboard the State of England
their Admiral Shipp the *Fairfax*
this 29 June 1651.

Your very humble servant
(Sgd.) WM. PENN.

Stilo Antiquo.

Any additional information about the activities of Penn's squadron, then in the Mediterranean in search of Rupert,¹ is of particular interest, for this was the first occasion (since the Crusades) that English vessels of war had penetrated as far as Malta. Penn's Journal, as printed by his descendant Granville Penn in 1833, makes no mention of the incidents referred to in this letter. On 25 June 1651, however, there is a note that 'the Consul of Tunis came on board me, to get passage for Trepani'.² Further, Granville Penn states in a footnote: 'I exceedingly regret that, in the course of various removals, I have mislaid, and cannot at present recover, a curious and rare tract, containing letters which passed at this period between Penn and the Spanish Viceroy; and between Penn and the Venerable Grand-Master of Malta, Paul Lascaris Castellar. . . .'³ It seems likely that our knowledge of these incidents will never be complete. Perhaps it may be assumed that Penn's stern mode of address was not taken amiss by the Grand Master, and that the English demands were complied with. Otherwise, the quarrel would almost certainly have reached proportions that would have made the affair far better known. I can find no confirmation for Mgr. Mifsud's statement that 'the Knights were obdurate'.⁴

¹ Blake was meanwhile reducing the Scilly Isles and Jersey. See the Rev. J. R. Powell, 'Blake's reduction of Jersey in 1651', *The Mariner's Mirror*, xviii (1932), 64 ff.

² Granville Penn, *Memorials of . . . Sir William Penn*, i. 346. Mifsud says that the Consul's name was Samuel Boothoule.

³ Granville Penn, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 248.

A second letter of naval interest is from Sir John Narbrough to the Grand Master.¹ It was addressed 'To the Most Eminent Prince the Lord Cottoner, Great Master of the Order of Malta', and written 'On board his Ma^{ts} Ship *Henrietta*. Malta. October 17^e: 1675'. It runs as follows:

Most Eminent S^r,

After the Tender of my humble service with my hearty thanks for the manifold favours vouchsafed unto my Mastor the King of Great Brittain &c. and for your Highnesses extraordinary Kindnesse manifested to myselfe. And Eminent S^r since your favour of Product,² I have sent on Shoar one of my Captaines to waite upon your Highness with the Presentment of this my Gratfull Letter and withall to certifie your Eminency that I did and do expect a Salute to be given by your Highnesse, to my Mastors Flagg (which I carry) correspondent to the salutes, which you give to the Flags of the King of Spaine and the King of France, which are carried in the same place, it being the Expectation of the King my Master. Formerly your Eminency was pleased to make some scruple of my command as Admirale, which I humbly conceive your Highnesse is fully satisfied in, since you received the last Lettor from the King of Great Brittain &c.

S^r, I have since my arrivall at your Port often Employed the consul: dis, claus,³ to waite upon your Highness concerning the Saluts, but have not received any satisfactory answer thereunto, which I now humbly desire may be returned unto me by my Officor, and withall that your Eminency wilbe pleased to Honnour me with your commands wherein I may serve you, which shalbe most chearfully imbraced & Readily performed by

Most Eminent S^r

Your Highnesse's most humble
& faithfull servant

(Sgd.) JOHN NARBROUGH (*Capt.*)

On board his Ma^{ts} ship
Henrietta. Malta.
October 17^e: 1675.

Narbrough had entered the Mediterranean in the previous April and was engaged in hostilities against Tripoli, which was forced into a treaty on 5 March 1676. Malta was

¹ Contained in the same 'Liber Epistolarum'. Printed by Mgr. Mifsud, pp. 250-1.

² Probably 'pratique' (Ed.).

³ *Sic* in transcript (Ed.).

used as a victualling base during these operations, and relations between the English Government and the Knights of St. John seem to have been very cordial. On 9 May 1675 we find (in the Admiralty Journal) 'Mr Secretary Coventry reading a letter of great civility from the Grand Master of that place (Malta) to his Majesty, promising the best assistance the same can afford, as he hath already shewn to Sir J(ohn) N(arbrough) at his stopping there in his return from Tripoli to Livorne; His Majesty is the more confirmed in the fitness of Malta for the rendezvous of his fleet, ordering a letter of thanks to be prepared by Mr Secretary to the Grand Master for his said offer'.¹ On 26 January 1676, Charles II wrote a letter to the Grand Master handsomely acknowledging Maltese help in the war against Tripoli.² When the Tripolines made peace 'instead of the 80,000 dollars which were to have been paid to Sir John Narbrough under the Treaty, he has redeemed a great number of Christians of foreign nations, who were in slavery there, and particularly several Knights of Malta, who thus owe their liberty to his Majesty's generosity and charity'. It was officially stated that the Maltese slaves were redeemed because 'that island has showed much kindness to our fleet since we have been reducing of Tripoli'.³

In these circumstances, Narbrough's somewhat sharp letter to the Grand Master, on the subject of salutes, seems rather mysterious. Malta was invaluable to us as a victualling

¹ J. R. Tanner (ed.), *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Naval Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge*, vol. iv, Admiralty Journal (printed for the Navy Records Society, 1923), p. 181.

² Printed *in extenso* in R. Montgomery Martin, *The Story of the British Possessions in the Mediterranean* (1837), pp. 138-9 (The British Colonial Library, vol. vii.). Charles wrote (in Latin): 'Not only in dispatches from Admiral Sir John Narbrough, whom we have placed in complete command of our fleet in the Mediterranean, but also from other sources, we have learned with what kindness Your Eminence, and by your command and example the whole sacred Maltese Order, have welcomed our warships. Things could not have been better at home in our own bases than they were in your harbour at Malta.'

³ Florence E. Dyer, *The Life of Admiral Sir John Narbrough* (1931), p. 155.

base; the Knights were glad to see reinforcements arriving against their constant enemy, the Barbary Corsairs; and every motive of policy was thus in favour of the most cordial relations. Such relations were achieved and maintained; yet here we find them, partially at least, impaired by a dispute about salutes. British and Maltese vessels customarily saluted one another without demur. For instance, at this time (3 October 1675) we find Henry Teonge writing in his Diary: 'This morning wee discover 2 sayles ahead of us. . . . Just at that instant we discover them to be Maltees by their white cross . . . the first salutes us with 3 gunns . . . whom we also answer with 3 gunns. The other salutes us with 7 and wee return 7 againe.'¹ But the question of what salute Narbrough should give the city of Valetta, and what salute the city should return, was deemed more important, establishing the relations between the Sovereign Order and the representative of a Sovereign State. The English were determined that no favour should be shown to French or Spanish pretensions, even in a matter of formal politeness.

After a good deal of correspondence between Charles II and Grand Master Cotoner, the matter was adjusted. The Knights did not prove intransigent,² for it was invariably their policy to remain on good terms with everyone save the Infidel.

So strongly did Narbrough feel on this subject, that he was at great pains to ensure that no such difficulties should recur. In 1677, preparations were being made for him to depart once more for the Mediterranean. So we find, in the Admiralty Journal for 27 June 1677: ' . . . RESOLVED also, for preventing the dispute which was made by the Grand Master of Malta, touching his reception of Sir John Narbrough for want of the title of admiral, that of Commander-in-Chief not being enough understood by him, that in his Majesty's letter to the said Grand Master, Sir John Nar-

¹ W. G. Perrin, 'The Diary of Henry Teonge', *The Mariner's Mirror*, iii (1913), 144.

² E. W. Schermerhorn, *Malta of the Knights* (1929), pp. 244-5

brough have the title of Admiral.'¹ Thus was further occasion for misunderstanding removed.

Another letter of some naval interest is from the Bey of Benghazi, written from Benghazi on 29 October 1743.² The signature is in Arabic: but on the back, in a contemporary hand, is written: 'Mahamut Bei Caramelli. du Bei de Bengazy fils du Pacha de Tripoli du 28. 9bre. R. le 5 X^{bre}. 1743.' It runs as follows:

A Bengazy Le 28th 9^{bre} 1743.

Eminence,

Les representation que Le Sieur Payent Conseil de France dans mon Royaume me fait du 6 le Loin que liste de V. Em^{ce} auroit de Viande Dans Loccasion presante de La peste qu'il regne en Sicille et Naples Mobligent dy Envoyer Le presant Chargement de Bœuf et Mouton & En meme tems temoigner a V. Em^{ce} Le plaisir que J'auois De Correspondre avec Elle, Et Luy offrir tout ce qu'il peut se trouver Dans mon d'royaume quy peut necessiter apreuoiv V. Dt Isle. Le dit Conseil ma fait Connoître que V. Em^{ce} agreeroit que Je luy Presante quelque Cheveaux, Le dt Batiment ne pouvant en Porter qu'un Je vous L'envoye, et souhaite qu'il soit a vôtre satisfaction, Lequel Je vous prie D'accepter et attendant Les occasions De pouvoir presanter a V. Em^{ce} quelque chose de plus considerable. Je vous reïtere mes services, et suis avec un tres parfait Attachement,

(Signature in Arabic.)

This letter, from a member of the Karamanli family,³ has some interest apart from its comical pidgin French, the laborious work of some interpreter whose efforts would hardly receive the endorsement of the Académie française. As Professor G. N. Clark points out: 'North Africa, from the Atlantic coast of Morocco to the Libyan Desert, Barbary *par excellence*, was outside the European system of international law and conduct. Even when they were nominally

¹ J. R. Tanner (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 461.

² Regia Bibliotheca Melitensis, No. 1205. Lettres de la cour ecrites a L'Eminentissime Grand Maître Pinto Depuis 1741 jusqu'en 1748.

³ The summer house of the Karamanlis, outside the walls of Tripoli West (now known as the 'Villa Volpe') is perfectly preserved with its delightful gardens. But at Benghazi the very memory of the Karamanlis seems to have disappeared.

at peace, the Christians and Moslems never trusted one another or succeeded for long in abiding by the rules on which they agreed. Both sides tried to enforce such rules by collective and vicarious punishments, by reprisals, and by other devices to which men resort when there is no law between them.¹ Mediterranean naval history tends to be a monotonous tale of massacre and enslavement, mutiny and executions, torturings and assassinations. It is pleasant to meet relations between Moslems and Christians on a more civilised footing. The Bey of Benghazi's response to the problem created by an outbreak of plague in Sicily and Naples was eminently satisfactory, and might prove a model to later generations. The exchange of presents between sovereigns was a usual courtesy; and Arab blood-stock was always in demand in the West.

One final letter, from Frederick the Great of Prussia, is full of interest.² It was written at Breslau on 23 July 1762, and runs as follows:

Monsieur le Grande Maître des ordres de St Jean, de Jerusalem et du St Sépulcre. Ayant vû par la lettre, que vous m'avez écrite en date du 8 de Mars, que vous vous proposiés alors d'envoyer un Chevalier à la Cour d'Angleterre, pour informer cette Cour de la Conduite singulière que le Sr. Dodesworth a venue dans l'affaire des prises, qui ont été amenées à Malthe sous mon Pavillon, Je n'ai rien de plus pressé que d'ordonner selon vos desirs à Mes Ministres qui résident à Londres, d'assister ce Chevalier quand il y arrivera, par tout ce qui dependra d'eux, pour obtenir que le Sr. Dodesworth soit mis à la raison. Cette mission et en general tout ce que vous avés fait dans cette facheuse affaire, me fournit une preuve evidente de vos bonnes intentions à Mon égard. Je vous en fait Mes remercimens, en Vous assurant que Je Vous en conserverai toujours une reconnaissance parfaite, et que Je serois charmé si J'avois occasion de Vous être utile à Mon tour, et de pouvoir Vous donner mes marques de Ma consideration pour Vous et pour Votre Illustre Ordre. Sur ce Je prie Dieu qu'il vous ait Monsieur le

¹ 'The Barbary Corsairs in the Seventeenth Century', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, viii. (1944), 22.

² To Grand Master Manoel Pinto de Fonseca: Regia Bibliotheca Melitensis, Bibl. MS. 929, Arch. 57, Liber Epistolarum.

Grand Maître des ordres de St Jean, de Jérusalem et de St Sèpulcre en Sa Sainte et digne garde. Breslau ce 23 de Juillet 1762.

Votre tres affectionné Ami

F(r)ederic.

This letter opens up a host of interesting questions. 'Le Sr. Dodesworth' referred to by Frederick was John Dodsworth, British Consul in Malta. He had received his appointment on 3 January 1743 from Grand Master Pinto.¹ In 1747 he seems to have been trying to get his appointment confirmed by the British Government. On 22 October, for example, the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations were considering a letter 'relating to the appointment of a Consul at Malta'.²

The outbreak of the Seven Years' War at once created difficulties. French influence was predominant in the Order; and the English privateersmen felt that their enemies were treated better at Malta than they were. Privateering captains, such as Fortunatus Wright, Harvey, Robert Miller, William Hodgson and Hutchinson, harassed French shipping, and were none too scrupulous about Maltese susceptibilities. Consul John Dodsworth backed them to the limit, and there seems little doubt that he was one of the 'venturers' financially interested in privateering successes.

The use of the Prussian flag by these privateers, which occasioned Frederick's understandable outburst of ill-temper, may be readily explained. In 1762 Prussia was our ally (though not a very cordial one) and was at war with Russia, whereas we were still at peace with that country.³ By hoisting the Prussian flag, the British privateers would be in a position to take Russian prizes—though quite im-

¹ Mifsud, *op. cit.*, p. 277. All the information about Dodsworth is derived from this source unless otherwise stated.

² *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations* (P.R.O., vol. viii), pp. 253, 257-60. I am indebted to Dr. D. B. Horn for this and other references.

³ Robert Keith was British Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, 15 October 1757. Arrived March 1758. Left St. Petersburg early October 1762. John Hobart, Earl of Buckingham, Ambassador Extraordinary, arrived St. Petersburg 23 September 1762. [D. B. Horn, *British Diplomatic Representatives, 1689-1789* (London, 1932), pp. 115-16.]

properly, if adequate papers had not been provided by the Prussian government. Such an abuse of the Prussian flag would in any case have been a source of annoyance to Frederick: but, in the circumstances of March 1762, it was calculated to infuriate him. The Czarina had died in January: Frederick's most dangerous enemy, who had practically brought him to his knees, was thus removed. Frederick was most anxious to ingratiate himself with Peter III, and persuade him to retire from the conflict. In this he was successful: Peter III made peace in May. From January to May was thus a most critical period in Russo-Prussian relations; and any disturbance of these relations by an abuse of the Prussian flag in the Mediterranean must have worried Frederick considerably. Even after the conclusion of peace with Russia, it was necessary to nurse Russian susceptibilities until the Seven Years' War was finally concluded.

Consul John Dodsworth and his friends, the privateersmen, in their patriotic pursuit of private gain, had thus involved themselves in matters of high policy. Dodsworth does not seem to have come out of the affair very advantageously. The Knights of St. John demanded the restoration of the goods captured under the Prussian flag. Dodsworth refused to deliver them, and on 4 May 1762 put up a shield with the British Royal Arms over the door of his house. Some of the younger Knights were so exasperated by this that a riot nearly resulted.¹ Eventually an armed guard was placed at Dodsworth's door: and this 'state of siege' endured for nearly two years. The Knight Giorgio Valperga de Masino was dispatched to London to give an account of these proceedings.² This was the envoy to whom Frederick had promised his support.

¹ As early as 30 June 1762, Capt. Archd. Cleveland, in a letter to the Earl of Egremont, referred to 'the late Mr. Consul Dodsworth'. So it seems that he was already considered to have ceased to be consul. *Calendar of Home Office Papers*, 1760 (25 Oct.)-1765 (London, 1878).

² In the Malta Library there is a volume (No. 2194) 'Memoria Sulla rappresentanza fatta dal Gran Maestro alla Corte Britannica relativa a Giov. Dodsworth'. Hannibal P. Scicluna, *loc. cit.*, p. 23.

At this date the Seven Years' War was drawing near its close. Great Britain had gained all that she might reasonably expect, and was not averse from peace with the Bourbons. Moreover, though diplomatic relations with Russia had always been maintained, trade relations were rather difficult. In 1762, while Consul Dodsworth and his friends were pushing their own interests in the Mediterranean, the merchants of the Muscovy Company were pressing for the negotiation of a commercial treaty. In May 1762, difficulties occurred about 'the capture and condemnation of the ships and vessels of either nation for contraband trade in times of war'. By January 1763 the negotiations were going so badly that the mere renewal of the treaty of 1734 was being proposed. But it is clear that, when the case of Dodsworth was being debated at the Court of St. James's, there was likely to be every desire to conciliate Russia¹—and indeed to conciliate everyone, now that a war had been satisfactorily won, and time was needed to digest the proceeds.

The Grand Master, in the spring of 1763, removed Dodsworth from his post as Consul and appointed Angelo Rutter in his stead.² The sentry with fixed bayonet still stood at Dodsworth's door, which was later even more closely guarded. On 2 February 1763 the Royal Arms posted by Dodsworth over his door were taken down and Dodsworth himself (with his two younger children) was removed to St. Elmo Castle. His wife, and four other children, sought refuge in various religious houses. The Knight sent to London was sending excellent reports to Malta about his reception; and, the better his reports, the harder the screw was turned upon the unfortunate Dodsworth. The British

¹ *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade & Plantations from January 1759 to December 1763 preserved in the P.R.O.* (London Stationery Office, 1935), 30 April, 4-5-6-7-12 May, 11-23 November 1762, and 20 January 1763, pp. 276, 277, 289, 300, 327.

² The British do not seem to have been favourably impressed by this appointment. On 16 August 1768, Commodore R. Spry wrote to the Earl of Shelburne, and referred to 'Mr Angel Rutter, who styles himself Consul at Malta'. *Calendar of Home Office Papers*, 1766-9 (London, 1879).

Government, anxious (now that peace had come) to bring these vexatious questions to a close, smiled upon Valperga de Masino's mission, and appointed Commodore Thomas Harrison as envoy to Malta (with no special rank) 'to enquire into the differences between the Order & John Dodsworth'.¹ The gallant Commodore, and some colleagues, formed part of a Court of Enquiry held upon the Dodsworth affair. They fell out with the Knights on matters of etiquette, and a show at the Theatre, which was to have been given in their honour, was brought to an untimely end. But, although Harrison and his friends doubtless sympathised with Dodsworth wholeheartedly and did their best to snub the Knights, their instructions seem to have been clear. They could do nothing for Dodsworth, whose case was remitted to the Civil Court. He was fined 200,000 Scudi (Judge Clinchant, 6 March 1766). Whether he paid or not remains in doubt; and thus John Dodsworth passes from our ken.

Clearly, a fully documented account of Dodsworth's life—from Maltese, British, Prussian, and other sources—would be of exceptional interest. This final instance of the sort of material available at Valetta may perhaps confirm the impression given by the other letters: that here is a neglected source, crying out to be worked upon and linked with information from other places.

¹ D. B. Horn, *British Diplomatic Representatives, 1689-1789* (London, 1932), p. 75.

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